

**SELECTED ESSAYS OF
G. K. CHESTERTON**

G. K. CHESTERTON

was born in London in 1874. In 1891 he entered the Slade School of Art, where he soon discovered that he could better express himself as a writer than as an artist. His first book appeared in 1900 and from then until his death in 1936 he was a prolific writer. The essays selected in this volume date roughly from 1908-1936.

ESSAYS

G.K.CHESTERTON

SELECTED WITH A PREFACE BY JOHN GUEST

ILLUSTRATED BY NEWTON WHITTAKER



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PREFACE

IN a passage typical for its mixture of humour and truth, G. K. Chesterton describes his own birth: "Bowing down in blind incredulity, as is my custom, before mere authority and the tradition of the elders, superstitiously swallowing a story I could not test at the time by experiment of private judgment, I am firmly of the opinion that I was born on the 29th May, 1874, on Campden Hill, Kensington." A faith in the virtues of authority and tradition was, in fact, to become the chief mark of his writing as a philosopher and social reformer.

It will be seen that the date of his birth coincides roughly with the beginning of the last phase of nineteenth century literature—what Chesterton himself calls "the break-up of the Victorian compromise:" and it is necessary to recall briefly the changing background of his youth which helped to formulate the individual views he held throughout his life, many of which are expressed in this volume. It is always difficult to confine periods of literature within the rigid boundaries of dates, for a movement in literature, like an army of men on the march, has its scouts, its vanguard, and its stragglers; but it is nevertheless recognisable that the last quarter of the nineteenth century did form a definite period characterised by an individual outlook and literature. "A section of a long and splendid literature," writes Chesterton, "can be divided as one cuts a currant cake or a Gruyère cheese, taking the currants (or the holes) as they come. Or it can be divided as

P R E F A C E

one cuts wood—along the grain: if one thinks there is a grain." In the present case, the former method is on the whole more applicable. The unity which justifies the grouping of these years as a period lies in the general reaction to a common background—the upsetting of Victorian equilibrium. In brief, this collapse was due to a lack of confidence caused by the decline of British economic activity. This, in its turn, reacted upon the condition of the working classes, and Socialism, which had been dormant for some years, again appeared as an active force. There was also a reaction against mechanisation, and the sudden expansion and popularisation of scientific knowledge. Renewed interest in metaphysics and philosophy became evident with a consequent revisal of the accepted standards of morality and behaviour. People began to question the too-rigid codes which were then fashionable, and a growing preoccupation with the study of psychology became apparent in the literature and thought of the day.

The reaction to this unrest found expression in two literary movements, and the turn of the century marked roughly the death of one and the ascendancy of the other. Chesterton was born in the first to become a supporter of the second. The first, culminating in the "nineties" with Wilde for high priest, was a pessimistic withdrawal from the field of action into a refuge of Romanticism. The second was expressed in the optimistic doctrines of action that ushered in the twentieth century. Despite the fact that the scouts and vanguard of this movement for regeneration had already been in the field for some time, it was the outbreak of the South African war, in 1899, that turned public interest in their direction, and it was as a pamphleteer during this crisis, but

P R E F A C E

on the side of the Boers, that Chesterton first came into prominence. With the first reverses and anxieties of the war there was a bracing up of the national consciousness, a hardening of the national purpose. War rouses primitive emotions and instincts, and in this new atmosphere the fashionable elements of detached intellectuality, pessimism, and æstheticism rapidly lost popularity. "The world," wrote Chesterton, "was full of the trampling of totally new forces, gold was sighted from far in a sort of cynical romanticism: the guns opened across Africa; and the great queen died." Action was now the popular cry, but though the new writers reacted in their efforts for social salvation against a period destitute of moral unity, they were all at loggerheads as to how this should be achieved.

Chesterton and Belloc, opposed to the Socialism of Shaw and Wells and the Imperialism of Kipling, became the robust champions of Traditionalism. They harked back to the simple communities of the Middle Ages with their happy self-confidence, their simple beliefs, their agricultural pursuits and craftsmanship. They revolted against the sordidness of industrial life and the endless complexities of moral issues. They stood for orthodoxy and authority, and were strongly opposed to the radical changes suggested by Shaw and Wells. They advocated common sense and natural instinct against the dangers of theory and experimental programmes founded upon the principles of pure reason. Speaking of Shaw, Chesterton in his *Autobiography* (1936) writes: "I have argued with him on almost every subject in the world; and we have always been on opposite sides, without affection or animosity. I have defended the institution of the family against

P R E F A C E

his Platonist fancies about the State. I have defended the institutions of Beef and Beer against his hygienic severity of vegetarianism and total abstinence. I have defended the old Liberal notion of nationalism against the new Socialist notion of internationalism. . . . I have defended what I regard as the sacred limitations of Man against what he regards as the soaring illimitability of Superman. Indeed, it was only in this last matter of Man and Superman that I felt the differences to become most clear and acute." Being a deeply religious man, it was consistent with Chesterton's outlook and temperament that he should have joined the Roman Catholic Church, of which his life-long friend, Belloc was already a member. Chesterton has, in fact, stated that the reasons for his differences of agreement with Kipling, Shaw and Wells can be traced to a "feeling that each of them erred through an ultimate or religious error." The amplification of this idea may be found in his book *Heretics*, which contains some studies of contemporary writers. "The gloomy pleasure" of his life, he once wrote, was "the defence of orthodoxy and the pursuit of heretics." From the point of view of the other side, the "Chester-Belloc" as Shaw termed it, was an amusing monster, but one which, being incapable of enlightenment, retired voluntarily, like all monsters, from the relentless march of time. Even the Great War did not fundamentally change Chesterton's views and he continued to attack Socialism, heretics, the "slavery" of twentieth century mechanised life, and the refined eccentricities of "modern" art, until his death in 1936.

As an essayist, Chesterton touched upon almost every aspect of contemporary life, and it is in such a

P R E F A C E

volume as this that the reader will find the most comprehensive display of his views, his amazing versatility, and his polish as a writer. He was unusually prolific, and during the latter part of his life hardly a year passed without the appearance of one or more of his works. In addition to the essays, he wrote verse, plays, fiction, biography, history, studies in literary criticism, politics, philosophy, and theology. The essays selected in this volume date roughly from 1908 to the time of his death. It may be a matter of opinion whether the views which he expresses in them are right or wrong, but at least he is consistent. In a time of divergent and changing opinions he was predominantly a man who knew his own mind and was not afraid to express his independent convictions. He hated the so-called sophistication of the twentieth century and deplored the loss of what he called the "great Gusto." He derides heartily all morbidity, puritanism, and "precious" intellectuality. He is frankly, even childish, enthusiastic in a period of cynicism and sophistication; he writes of his belief in the importance of romance and fairy tales in an age of aggressive realism, of his belief in God in a time when atheism and agnosticism are fashionable; he believed in ritual and pageantry and fine craftsmanship in a time which tolerates free-thinking, eccentric unfinished artistic work, and tawdry mass-produced commodities. The following passage from his essay on "The Prison of Jazz" shows clearly his point of view and expresses, incidentally, a sentiment that is still held by many though it may not, at the moment, be fashionable: "I do not demand a high place in English letters, or a prominent position in the *Golden Treasury*, for the chorus

P R E F A C E

of my youth which ran 'Beer, beer, glorious beer, fill yourself right up to here.' But I do say that nobody, after consuming any number of cocktails, has yet been inspired to cry anything so spirited and spontaneous and direct. The poetry inspired by cocktails is timid and tortuous and self-conscious and indirect. I do not say that the song beginning 'Daisy, Daisy,' is one of the supreme achievements of the English muse, but I do say that it is a song that can be sung. In the age of jazz and cocktails, men either write songs that could not possibly be sung, or leave off writing songs and write fragments of a demented diary instead."

Apart from an underlying seriousness, it will be seen from these essays that Chesterton's literary temperament is chiefly that of a humourist. Such essays as "On Running After One's Hat," "The Fallacy of Success," and "The Extraordinary Cabman" all conceal beneath a richly humorous style some serious thought. He was rarely cynical or sentimental and his humour is consequently of fine quality, robust and traditional, springing (as does the greater part of true comedy) from the essential incongruities of human life—directly or by inference it reflects a profound truth. Another quality of Chesterton's writing, and a comparatively rare one in literature, is his fine sense of the fantastic, even of nonsense. Paradoxical as it may sound, this was partly a natural outcome of his ability to think clearly, and partly a reaction against what he regarded as the limitations of pure reason. Fantasy, nonsense, and fairy tales, as will be seen from many of the essays and stories in this volume, were to Chesterton of extreme importance. He regarded them, and rightly so, as an indispensable comple-

P R E F A C E

ment to reality. "The Angry Street," "The Shop Of Ghosts," and "How I Found The Superman" are all short stories of rare charm and imagination. The incident of Chesterton lifting the iron lid of a coal-hole in the pavement, and gazing down to see beneath his feet a dark blue sky studded with stars, is unforgettable.

With regard to style, Chesterton's writing can be compared closely with Belloc's. An affinity of temperament produced in these "two free-lances of tradition" a distinct similarity of method, though of the two Belloc is perhaps the more careful, if Chesterton the more robust. The influence of Belloc's French ancestry is never quite absent from his writing, whereas Chesterton is wholly, downrightly, English: a glass of wine and a tankard of beer would not be an unjust comparison. The most individual mark of Chesterton's style, and the one with which his name is instinctively connected, is his use of paradox; that is, statements which appear on first hearing to be absurd or contradictory in themselves, but which upon examination are shown to be not incompatible with reason. These produce a constant piquancy and unexpectedness in his style, particularly where he is writing as a controversialist, and do much to refresh with new light and colour the traditional doctrines of which he wrote. His ideas on freedom, for instance, the liberty of mankind, and the views which led him to a logical acceptance of the Roman Catholic faith are embodied in his paradox that "a fixed creed is absolutely indispensable to freedom." To him, our mechanised civilisation has reduced mankind to slavery, and a Socialistic state would only confirm and worsen this condition. It is only from a fixed

P R E F A C E

basis of religious belief that one can be free to consider human problems in their entirety. "The wilder theorists of our time," he wrote, "are quite unable to wander. When they talk of making new roads they are only making new ruts." The theorist, he points out paradoxically, is limited by the largeness of his own generalisation—the Marxian can see nothing beyond economics, nor is the Freudian ever free to think beyond the boundaries of sex. Despite the fact that he was occasionally tempted into creating paradoxes that were shallow, showy rather than effective, it is nevertheless true that on the whole he succeeded in fusing new life into many truisms. Apart from the qualities already discussed, his writing is vigorous, robust and provocative. He had also a very fair gift for descriptive writing, as can be seen from such essays as "A Piece of Chalk," "The Wind and the Trees," "A Cab Ride Across Country," and the touching episode of "The Travelers in State." One essay in this volume deserves special mention—"The Diabolist"—for it is curiously different from his other work. Chesterton himself describes the incident as one of the most terrible things that ever happened to him. It is written with unusual sensitiveness, and a vivid impression of horror that is quite absent from his other essays. For once, too, there is no attempt at humour. The essay is valuable in that it shows us, if only for a brief moment, a side to his nature which he rarely exposed.

Chesterton once compared Hilaire Belloc to Dr. Johnson, and Shaw wrote of Chesterton—perhaps satirically—that he was a man "who by sheer literary force has taken the position in London created in the eighteenth century by Dr. Johnson."

P R E F A C E

Chesterton, in handing the laurel to Belloc, took it, as it were, from his own head for it is certainly true that of the two men Chesterton bore a closer resemblance to the great Doctor. Both men, by the scope of their interests and intellect, absorbed and reflected in characteristic form many aspects of the life of their times. Both had rigid, if personal, ideas on religion and morality. Both tended to be dogmatic and impatient of fools, though this latter characteristic appeared less as a limitation than as an added strength and colour to their personalities. Both had a deep-rooted respect for common sense and orthodoxy. Both loved children. It is true also to say that both men were lacking to a certain extent in sensitivity, in appreciation of the more sensuous forms of expression such as music. In appearance there were also similarities—a massive frame and a shambling bear-like untidiness. It would be pointless to attempt to compare the literary and historical importance of the two men, though the similarity of temperament and outlook are worth noting. Chesterton would certainly have agreed heartily with Dr. Johnson that “there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good Tavern or Inn.”

Humour, fantasy, high spirits and robust common sense are the outstanding qualities of the essays that follow, and the qualities for which he will most probably be remembered. One might paraphrase a verse of Belloc's to say of Chesterton that:

“He held to the Traditional plan
And fortified his own belief
In Natural Law, the Rights of Man,
With Paradox, and Beer, and Beef.”

P R E F A C E

Chesterton's shortcomings were those of a strong man, the limitations of one who has determined upon a certain course and rigidly adhered to it. "A very moderate sense and sanity," he wrote, "is all I have ever claimed to possess," but it is possible that, in saying so, he did not realise the extent to which these precious qualities are far from commonplace.

JOHN GUEST.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	7
COCKNEYS AND THEIR JOKES	23
THE FALLACY OF SUCCESS	31
ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT	41
FRENCH AND ENGLISH	46
THE BOY	52
PHONETIC SPELLING	60
WINE WHEN IT IS RED	65
A PIECE OF CHALK	70
THE SECRET OF A TRAIN	75
THE PERFECT GAME	80
THE EXTRAORDINARY CABMAN	85
AN ACCIDENT	90
THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING ONE LEG	95
ON LYING IN BED	100
THE TWELVE MEN	107
THE WIND AND THE TREES	112

CONTENTS

	PAGE
A CAB RIDE ACROSS COUNTRY	117
THE LITTLE BIRDS WHO WON'T SING	123
THE TRAVELLERS IN STATE	129
THE DIABOLIST	134
THE ANGRY STREET : A BAD DREAM	140
THE SHOP OF GHOSTS : A GOOD DREAM	147
THE BALLADE OF A STRANGE TOWN	153
THE APPETITE OF EARTH	159
THE RED TOWN	163
A CRIMINAL HEAD	168
HOW I FOUND THE SUPERMAN	173
THE GARDEN OF THE SEA	178
THE GARDENER AND THE GUINEA	182
THE MAD OFFICIAL	187
THE HYPOTHETICAL HOUSEHOLDER	194
THE PRIEST OF SPRING	199
THE MYSTAGOGUE	205
THE ROMANTIC IN THE RAIN	210
THE ARCHITECT OF SPEARS	214
TENNYSON	219
ON PIGS AS PETS	224
THE DUTY OF THE HISTORIAN	229

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE FEAR OF THE FILM	234
WINGS AND THE HOUSEMAID	240
THE SLAVERY OF FREE VERSE	245
FALSE THEORY AND THE THEATRE	250
THE SENTIMENTALISM OF DIVORCE	258
THE PAGODA OF PROGRESS	263
ON ELECTRIC HOUSES	268
ON THE PILLORY	273
ON SENTIMENT	278
ON LEISURE	284
ON PLEASURE-SEEKING	292
ON DOMESTIC SERVANTS	298
ON EVIL EUPHEMISMS	305
ON A HUMILIATING HERESY	310
ON LIBERTIES AND LOTTERIES	315
ON BUSINESS EDUCATION	320
ON LOGIC AND LUNACY	325
ON SIGHT SEEING	330
ON THE TEUTONIC THEORY	335
ON LITERARY CLIQUES	341
ON THE SIMPLICITY OF ASIA	346
ON FICTIONAL CONVENTIONS	351

C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
ON THE PRISON OF JAZZ	356
ON BOOKS FOR PESSIMISTS	361
ON THE TOUCHY REALIST	366
ON FACING FACTS	374
ABOUT MEREDITH	380

ILLUSTRATIONS

On pigs as pets	<i>Frontispiece</i>
. . . by thrift and hard work they would all become Lord Mayors	<i>facing page 39</i>
. . . if only one had a coloured pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling	„ 100
. . . this would logically allow me to fire off fifty-nine enormous field guns day and night	„ 188
Will it be necessary to kidnap an African gentleman and force him into acting Othello?	„ 253
It is because artists do not practice . . . that the world has lost its philosophy	„ 291
. . . the refined of more remote days would feel very sick if they read his little poems	„ 366

COCKNEYS AND THEIR JOKES

A WRITER in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* is very angry indeed with my performances in this column. His precise terms of reproach are, "Mr. G. K. Chesterton is not a humourist: not even a Cockney humourist." I do not mind his saying that I am not a humourist—in which (to tell the truth) I think he is quite right. But I do resent his saying that I am not a Cockney. That envenomed arrow, I admit, went home. If a French writer said to me, "He is no metaphysician: not even an English metaphysician," I could swallow the insult to my metaphysics, but I should feel angry about the insult to my country. So I do not urge that I am a humourist; but I do insist that I am a Cockney. If I were a humourist, I should certainly be a Cockney humourist; if I were a saint, I should certainly be a Cockney saint. I need not recite the splendid catalogue of Cockney saints who have written their names on our noble old City churches. I need not trouble you with the long list of the Cockney humourists who have discharged their bills (or failed to discharge them) in our noble old City taverns. We can weep together over the pathos of the poor Yorkshireman, whose county has never produced some humour not intelligible to the rest of the world. And we can smile together when he says that somebody or other is "not even" a Cockney humourist like Samuel Johnson or Charles Lamb. It is surely sufficiently obvious that all the best humour that exists in our language is Cockney

humour. Chaucer was a Cockney; he had his house close to the Abbey. Dickens was a Cockney; he said he could not think without the London streets. The London taverns heard always the quaintest conversation, whether it was Ben Jonson's at the Mermaid or Sam Johnson's at the Cock. Even in our own time it may be noted that the most vital and genuine humour is still written about London. Of this type is the mild and humane irony which marks Mr. Pett Ridge's studies of the small grey streets. Of this type is the simple but smashing laughter of the best tales of Mr. W. W. Jacobs, telling of the smoke and sparkle of the Thames. No; I concede that I am not a Cockney humourist. No; I am not worthy to be. Some time, after sad and strenuous after-lives; some time, after fierce and apocalyptic incarnations; in some strange world beyond the stars, I may become at last a Cockney humourist. In that potential paradise I may walk among the Cockney humourists, if not an equal, at least a companion. I may feel for a moment on my shoulder the hearty hand of Dryden and thread the labyrinths of the sweet insanity of Lamb. But that could only be if I were not only much cleverer, but much better than I am. Before I reach that sphere I shall have left behind, perhaps, the sphere that is inhabited by angels, and even passed that which is appropriated exclusively to the use of Yorkshiremen.

No; London is in this matter attacked upon its strongest ground. London is the largest of the bloated modern cities; London is the smokiest; London is the dirtiest; London is, if you will, the most sombre; London is, if you will, the most miserable. But London is certainly the most amusing and the most amused. You may prove

COCKNEYS AND THEIR JOKES

that we have the most tragedy; the fact remains that we have the most comedy, that we have the most farce. We have at the very worst a splendid hypocrisy of humour. We conceal our sorrow behind a screaming derision. You speak of people who laugh through their tears; it is our boast that we only weep through our laughter. There remains always this great boast, perhaps the greatest boast that is possible to human nature. I mean the great boast that the most unhappy part of our population is also the most hilarious part. The poor can forget that social problem which we (the moderately rich) ought never to forget. Blessed are the poor; for they alone have not the poor always with them. The honest poor can sometimes forget poverty. The honest rich can never forget it.

I believe firmly in the value of all vulgar notions, especially of vulgar jokes. When once you have got hold of a vulgar joke, you may be certain that you have got hold of a subtle and spiritual idea. The men who made the joke saw something deep which they could not express except by something silly and emphatic. They saw something delicate which they could only express by something indelicate. I remember that Mr. Max Beerbohm (who has every merit except democracy) attempted to analyse the jokes at which the mob laughs. He divided them into three sections: jokes about bodily humiliation, jokes about things alien, such as foreigners, and jokes about bad cheese. Mr. Max Beerbohm thought he understood the first two forms; but I am not sure that he did. In order to understand vulgar humour it is not enough to be humorous. One must also be vulgar, as I am. And in the first case it is surely obvious that it is not merely at the fact

of something being hurt that we laugh (as I trust we do) when a Prime Minister sits down on his hat. If that were so we should laugh whenever we saw a funeral. We do not laugh at the mere fact of something falling down; there is nothing humorous about leaves falling or the sun going down. When our house falls down we do not laugh. All the birds of the air might drop around us in a perpetual shower like a hailstorm without arousing a smile. If you really ask yourself why we laugh at a man sitting down suddenly in the street you will discover that the reason is not only recondite, but ultimately religious. All the jokes about men sitting down on their hats are really theological jokes; they are concerned with the Dual Nature of Man. They refer to the primary paradox that man is superior to all the things around him and yet is at their mercy.

Quite equally subtle and spiritual is the idea at the back of laughing at foreigners. It concerns the almost torturing truth of a thing being like oneself and yet not like oneself. Nobody laughs at what is entirely foreign; nobody laughs at a palm tree. But it is funny to see the familiar image of God disguised behind the black beard of a Frenchman or the black face of a Negro. There is nothing funny in the sounds that are wholly inhuman, the howling of wild beasts or of the wind. But if a man begins to talk like oneself, but all the syllables come out different, then if one is a man one feels inclined to laugh, though if one is a gentleman one resists the inclination.

Mr. Max Beerbohm, I remember, professed to understand the first two forms of popular wit, but said that the third quite stumped him. He could

COCKNEYS AND THEIR JOKES

not see why there should be anything funny about bad cheese. I can tell him at once. He has missed the idea because it is subtle and philosophical, and he was looking for something ignorant and foolish. Bad cheese is funny because it is (like the foreigner or the man fallen on the pavement) the type of the transition or transgression across a great mystical boundry. Bad cheese symbolises the change from the inorganic to the organic. Bad cheese symbolises the startling prodigy of matter taking on vitality. It symbolises the origin of life itself. And it is only about such solemn matters as the origin of life that the democracy condescends to joke. Thus, for instance, the democracy jokes about marriage, because marriage is a part of mankind. But the democracy would never deign to joke about Free Love, because Free Love is a piece of priggishness.

As a matter of fact, it will be generally found that the popular joke is not true to the letter, but is true to the spirit. The vulgar joke is generally in the oddest way the truth and yet not the fact. For instance, it is not in the least true that mothers-in-law are as a class oppressive and intolerable; most of them are both devoted and useful. All the mothers-in-law I have ever had were admirable. Yet the legend of the comic papers is profoundly true. It draws attention to the fact that it is much harder to be a nice mother-in-law than to be nice in any other conceivable relation of life. The caricatures have drawn the worst mother-in-law a monster, by way of expressing the fact that the best mother-in-law is a problem. The same is true of the perpetual jokes in comic papers about shrewish wives and henpecked husbands. It is all a frantic

exaggeration, but it is an exaggeration of a truth; whereas all the modern mouthings about oppressed women are the exaggerations of a falsehood. If you read even the best of the intellectuals of to-day you will find them saying that in the mass of the democracy the woman is the chattel of her lord, like his bath or his bed. But if you read the comic literature of the democracy you will find that the lord hides under the bed to escape from the wrath of his chattel. This is not the fact, but it is much nearer the truth. Every man who is married knows quite well, not only that he does not regard his wife as a chattel, but that no man can conceivably ever have done so. The joke stands for an ultimate truth, and that is a subtle truth. It is one not very easy to state correctly. It can, perhaps, be most correctly stated by saying that, even if the man is the head of the house, he knows he is the figure-head.

But the vulgar comic papers are so subtle and true that they are even prophetic. If you really want to know what is going to happen to the future of our democracy, do not read the modern sociological prophecies, do not read even Mr. Wells's Utopias for this purpose, though you should certainly read them if you are fond of good honesty and good English. If you want to know what will happen, study the pages of *Snaps* or *Patchy Bits* as if they were the dark tablets graven with the oracles of the gods. For, mean and gross as they are, in all seriousness, they contain what is entirely absent from all Utopias and all the sociological conjectures of our time: they contain some hint of the actual habits and manifest desires of the English people. If we are really to find out what the democracy will

COCKNEYS AND THEIR JOKES

ultimately do with itself, we shall surely find it, not in the literature which studies the people, but in the literature which the people studies.

I can give two chance cases in which the common or Cockney joke was a much better prophecy than the careful observations of the most cultured observer. When England was agitated, previous to the last General Election, about the existence of Chinese labour, there was a distinct difference between the tone of the politicians and the tone of the populace. The politicians who disapproved of Chinese labour were most careful to explain that they did not in any sense disapprove of Chinese. According to them, it was a pure question of legal propriety, of whether certain clauses in the contract of indenture were not inconsistent with our constitutional traditions: according to them, the case would have been the same if the people had been Kafirs or Englishmen. It all sounded wonderfully enlightened and lucid; and in comparison the popular joke looked, of course, very poor. For the popular joke against the Chinese labourers was simply that they were Chinese; it was an objection to an alien type; the popular papers were full of gibes about pigtailed and yellow faces. It seemed that the Liberal politicians were raising an intellectual objection to a doubtful document of State; while it seemed that the Radical populace were merely roaring with idiotic laughter at the sight of a Chinaman's clothes. But the popular instinct was justified, for the vices revealed were Chinese vices.

But there is another case more pleasant and more up to date. The popular papers always persisted in representing the New Woman or the Suffragette as an ugly woman, fat, in spectacles, with bulging

clothes, and generally falling off a bicycle. As a matter of plain external fact, there was not a word of truth in this. The leaders of the movement of female emancipation are not at all ugly; most of them are extraordinarily good-looking. Nor are they at all indifferent to art or decorative costume; many of them are alarmingly attached to these things. Yet the popular instinct was right. For the popular instinct was that in this movement, rightly or wrongly, there was an element of indifference to female dignity, of a quite new willingness of women to be grotesque. These women did truly despise the pontifical quality of woman. And in our streets and around our Parliament we have seen the stately woman of art and culture turn into the comic woman of *Comic Bits*. And whether we think the exhibition justifiable or not, the prophecy of the comic papers is justified: the healthy and vulgar masses were conscious of a hidden enemy to their traditions who has now come out into the daylight, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. For the two things that a healthy person hates most between heaven and hell are a woman who is not dignified and a man who is.

THE FALLACY OF SUCCESS

THERE has appeared in our time a particular class of books and articles which I sincerely and solemnly think may be called the silliest ever known among men. They are much more wild than the wildest romances of chivalry and much more dull than the dullest religious tract. Moreover, the romances of chivalry were at least about chivalry; the religious tracts are about religion. But these things are about nothing; they are about what is called Success. On every bookstall, in every magazine, you may find works telling people how to succeed. They are books showing men how to succeed in everything; they are written by men who cannot even succeed in writing books. To begin with, of course, there is no such thing as Success. Or, if you like to put it so, there is nothing that is not successful. That a thing is successful merely means that it is; a millionaire is successful in being a millionaire and a donkey in being a donkey. Any live man has succeeded in living; any dead man may have succeeded in committing suicide. But, passing over the bad logic and bad philosophy in the phrase, we may take it, as these writers do, in the ordinary sense of success in obtaining money or worldly position. These writers profess to tell the ordinary man how he may succeed in his trade or speculation—how, if he is a builder, he may succeed as a builder; how, if he is a stockbroker, he may succeed as a stock-

broker. They profess to show him how, if he is a grocer, he may become a sporting yachtsman; how, if he is a tenth-rate journalist, he may become a peer; and how, if he is a German Jew, he may become an Anglo-Saxon. This is a definite and business-like proposal, and I really think that the people who buy these books (if any people do buy them) have a moral, if not a legal, right to ask for their money back. Nobody would dare to publish a book about electricity which literally told one nothing about electricity; no one would dare to publish an article on botany which showed that the writer did not know which end of a plant grew in the earth. Yet our modern world is full of books about Success and successful people which literally contain no kind of idea, and scarcely any kind of verbal sense.

It is perfectly obvious that in any decent occupation (such as bricklaying or writing books) there are only two ways (in any special sense) of succeeding. One is by doing very good work, the other is by cheating. Both are much too simple to require any literary explanation. If you are in for the high jump, either jump higher than any one else, or manage somehow to pretend that you have done so. If you want to succeed at whist, either be a good whist-player, or play with marked cards. You may want a book about jumping; you may want a book about whist; you may want a book about cheating at whist. But you cannot want a book about Success. Especially you cannot want a book about Success such as those which you can now find scattered by the hundred about the book-market. You may want to jump or to play cards; but you do not want to read wandering statements to the effect

THE FALLACY OF SUCCESS

that jumping is jumping, or that games are won by winners. If these writers, for instance, said anything about success in jumping it would be something like this: "The jumper must have a clear aim before him. He must desire definitely to jump higher than the other men who are in for the same competition. He must let no feeble feelings of mercy (sneaked from the sickening Little Englanders and Pro-Boers) prevent him from trying to *do his best*. He must remember that a competition in jumping is distinctly competitive, and that, as Darwin has gloriously demonstrated, **THE WEAKEST GO TO THE WALL.**" That is the kind of thing the book would say, and very useful it would be, no doubt, if read out in a low and tense voice to a young man just about to take the high jump. Or suppose that in the course of his intellectual rambles the philosopher of Success dropped upon our other case, that of playing cards, his bracing advice would run—"In playing cards it is very necessary to avoid the mistake (commonly made by maudlin humanitarians and Free Traders) of permitting your opponent to win the game. You must have grit and snap and *go in to win*. The days of idealism and superstition are over. We live in a time of science and hard common sense, and it has now been definitely proved that in any game where two are playing **IF ONE DOES NOT WIN THE OTHER WILL.**" It is all very stirring, of course; but I confess that if I were playing cards I would rather have some decent little book which told me the rules of the game. Beyond the rules of the game it is all a question either of talent or dishonesty; and I will undertake to provide either one or the other—which, it is not for me to say.

Turning over a popular magazine, I find a queer and amusing example. There is an article called "The Instinct that Makes People Rich." It is decorated in front with a formidable portrait of Lord Rothschild. There are many definite methods, honest and dishonest, which make people rich; the only "instinct" I know of which does it is that instinct which theological Christianity crudely describes as "the sin of avarice." That, however, is beside the present point. I wish to quote the following exquisite paragraphs as a piece of typical advice as to how to succeed. It is so practical; it leaves so little doubt about what should be our next step—

"The name of Vanderbilt is synonymous with wealth gained by modern enterprise. 'Cornelius,' the founder of the family, was the first of the great American magnates of commerce. He started as the son of a poor farmer; he ended as a millionaire twenty times over.

"He had the money-making instinct. He seized his opportunities, the opportunities that were given by the application of the steam-engine to ocean traffic, and by the birth of railway locomotion in the wealthy but undeveloped United States of America, and consequently he amassed an immense fortune.

"Now it is, of course, obvious that we cannot all follow exactly in the footsteps of this great railway monarch. The precise opportunities that fell to him do not occur to us. Circumstances have changed. But, although this is so, still, in our own sphere and in our own circumstances, we *can* follow his general methods; we can seize those opportunities that are

THE FALLACY OF SUCCESS

given us, and give ourselves a very fair chance of attaining riches."

In such strange utterances we see quite clearly what is really at the bottom of all these articles and books. It is not mere business; it is not even mere cynicism. It is mysticism; the horrible mysticism of money. The writer of that passage did not really have the remotest notion of how Vanderbilt made his money, or of how anybody else is to make his. He does, indeed, conclude his remarks by advocating some scheme; but it has nothing in the world to do with Vanderbilt. He merely wished to prostrate himself before the mystery of a millionaire. For when we really worship anything, we love not only its clearness but its obscurity. We exult in its very invisibility. Thus, for instance, when a man is in love with a woman he takes special pleasure in the fact that a woman is unreasonable. Thus, again, the very pious poet, celebrating his Creator, takes pleasure in saying that God moves in a mysterious way. Now, the writer of the paragraph which I have quoted⁹ does not seem to have had anything to do with a god, and I should not think (judging by his extreme unpracticality) that he had ever been really in love with a woman. But the thing he does worship—Vanderbilt—he treats in exactly this mystical manner. He really revels in the fact his deity Vanderbilt is keeping a secret from him. And it fills his soul with a sort of transport of cunning, an ecstasy of priestcraft, that he should pretend to be telling to the multitude that terrible secret which he does not know.

Speaking about the instinct that makes people rich, the same writer remarks—

“In olden days its existence was fully understood. The Greeks enshrined it in the story of Midas, of the ‘Golden Touch.’ Here was a man who turned everything he laid his hands upon into gold. His life was a progress amidst riches. Out of everything that came in his way he created the precious metal. ‘A foolish legend,’ said the wiseacres of the Victorian age. ‘A truth,’ say we of to-day. We all know of such men. We are ever meeting or reading about such persons who turn everything they touch into gold. Success dogs their very footsteps. Their life’s pathway leads unerringly upwards. They cannot fail.”

Unfortunately, however, Midas could fail; he did. His path did not lead unerringly upward. He starved because whenever he touched a biscuit or a ham sandwich it turned to gold. That was the whole point of the story, though the writer has to suppress it delicately, writing so near to a portrait of Lord Rothschild. The old fables of mankind are, indeed, unfathomably wise; but we must not have them expurgated in the interests of Mr. Vanderbilt. We must not have King Midas represented as an example of success; he was a failure of an unusually painful kind. Also, he had the ears of an ass. Also (like most other prominent and wealthy persons) he endeavoured to conceal the fact. It was his barber (if I remember right) who had to be treated on a confidential footing with regard to this peculiarity; and his barber, instead of behaving like a go-ahead person of the Succeed-at-all-costs



by thrift and work they would all become
Lord Mayors.

THE FALLACY OF SUCCESS

school and trying to blackmail King Midas, went away and whispered this splendid piece of society scandal to the reeds, who enjoyed it enormously. It is said that they also whispered it as the winds swayed them to and fro. I look reverently at the portrait of Lord Rothschild; I read reverently about the exploits of Mr. Vanderbilt. I know that I cannot turn everything I touch to gold; but then I also know that I have never tried, having a preference for other substances, such as grass, and good wine. I know that these people have certainly succeeded in something; that they have certainly overcome somebody; I know that they are kings in a sense that no men were ever kings before; that they create markets and bestride continents. Yet it always seems to me that there is some small domestic fact that they are hiding, and I have sometimes thought I heard upon the wind the laughter and whisper of the reeds.

At least, let us hope that we shall all live to see these absurd books about Success covered with a proper derision and neglect. They do not teach people to be successful, but they do teach people to be snobbish; they do spread a sort of evil poetry of worldliness. The Puritans are always denouncing books that inflame lust; what shall we say of books that inflame the viler passions of avarice and pride? A hundred years ago we had the ideal of the Industrious Apprentice; boys were told that by thrift and work they would all become Lord Mayors. This was fallacious, but it was manly, and had a minimum of moral truth. In our society, temperance will not help a poor man to enrich himself, but it may help him to respect himself. Good work will not make him a rich man, but good work may make him a

CHESTERTON'S ESSAYS

good workman. The Industrious Apprentice rose by virtues few and narrow indeed, but still virtues. But what shall we say of the gospel preached to the new Industrious Apprentice; the Apprentice who rises not by his virtues, but avowedly by his vices?

ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

I FEEL an almost savage envy on hearing that London has been flooded in my absence, while I am in the mere country. My own Battersea has been, I understand, particularly favoured as a meeting of the waters. Battersea was already, as I need hardly say, the most beautiful of human localities. Now that it has the additional splendour of great sheets of water, there must be something quite incomparable in the landscape (or waterscape) of my own romantic town. Battersea must be a vision of Venice. The boat that brought the meat from the butcher's must have shot along those lanes of rippling silver with the strange smoothness of the gondola. The greengrocer who brought cabbages to the corner of the Latchmere Road must have leant upon the oar with the unearthly grace of the gondolier. There is nothing so perfectly poetical as an island; and when a district is flooded it becomes an archipelago.

Some consider such romantic views of flood or fire slightly lacking in reality. But really this romantic view of such inconveniences is quite as practical as the other. The true optimist who sees in such things an opportunity for enjoyment is quite as logical and much more sensible than the ordinary "Indignant Ratepayer" who sees in them an opportunity for grumbling. Real pain, as in the case of being burnt at Smithfield or having a toothache, is a positive thing; it can be supported, but scarcely enjoyed. But, after all, our toothaches

are the exception, and as for being burnt at Smithfield, it only happens to us at the very longest intervals. And most of the inconveniences that make men swear or women cry are really sentimental or imaginative inconveniences—things altogether of the mind. For instance, we often hear grown-up people complaining of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train. Did you ever hear a small boy complain of having to hang about a railway station and wait for a train? No; for to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light and the green light on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains. I myself am of little boys' habit in this matter. They also serve who only stand and wait for the two fifteen. Their meditations may be full of rich and fruitful things. Many of the most purple hours of my life have been passed at Clapham Junction, which is now, I suppose, under water. I have been there in many moods so fixed and mystical that the water might well have come up to my waist before I noticed it particularly. But in the case of all such annoyances, as I have said, everything depends upon the emotional point of view. You can safely apply the test to almost every one of the things that are currently talked of as the typical nuisance of daily life.

For instance, there is a current impression that it is unpleasant to have to run after one's hat. Why should it be unpleasant to the well-ordered

ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

and pious mind? Not merely because it is running, and running exhausts one. The same people run much faster in games and sports. The same people run much more eagerly after an uninteresting little leather ball than they will after a nice silk hat. There is an idea that it is humiliating to run after one's hat; and when people say it is humiliating they mean that it is comic. It certainly is comic; but man is a very comic creature, and most of the things he does are comic—eating, for instance. And the most comic things of all are exactly the things that are most worth doing—such as making love. A man running after a hat is not half so ridiculous as a man running after a wife.

Now a man could, if he felt rightly in the matter, run after his hat with the manliest ardour and the most sacred joy. He might regard himself as a jolly huntsman pursuing a wild animal, for certainly no animal could be wilder. In fact, I am inclined to believe that hat-hunting on windy days will be the sport of the upper classes in the future. There will be a meet of ladies and gentlemen on some high ground on a gusty morning. They will be told that the professional attendants have started a hat in such-and-such a thicket, or whatever be the technical term. Notice that this employment will in the fullest degree combine sport with humanitarianism. The hunters would feel that they were not inflicting pain. Nay, they would feel that they were inflicting pleasure, rich, almost riotous pleasure, upon the people who were looking on. When last I saw an old gentleman running after his hat in Hyde Park, I told him that a heart so benevolent as his ought to be filled with peace and thanks at the thought of how much unaffected pleasure his every gesture

and boldly attitude were at that moment giving to the crowd.

The same principle can be applied to every other typical domestic worry. A gentleman trying to get a fly out of the milk or a piece of cork out of his glass of wine often imagines himself to be irritated. Let him think for a moment of the patience of anglers sitting by dark pools, and let his soul be immediately irradiated with gratification and repose. Again, I have known some people of very modern views driven by their distress to the use of theological terms to which they attached no doctrinal significance, merely because a drawer was jammed tight and they could not pull it out. A friend of mine was particularly afflicted in this way. Every day his drawer was jammed, and every day in consequence it was something else that rhymes to it. But I pointed out to him that this sense of wrong was really subjective and relative; it rested entirely upon the assumption that the drawer could, should, and would come out easily. "But if," I said, "you picture to yourself that you are pulling against some powerful and oppressive enemy, the struggle will become merely exciting and not exasperating. Imagine that you are tugging up a lifeboat out of the sea. Imagine that you are roping up a fellow-creature out of an Alpine crevass. Imagine even that you are a boy again and engaged in a tug-of-war between French and English." Shortly after saying this I left him, but I have no doubt at all that my words bore the best possible fruit. I have no doubt that every day of his life he hangs on to the handle of that drawer with a flushed face and eyes bright with battle, uttering encouraging shouts to himself, and seeming to

ON RUNNING AFTER ONE'S HAT

hear all round him the roar of an applauding ring.

So I do not think that it is altogether fanciful or incredible to suppose that even the floods in London may be accepted and enjoyed poetically. Nothing beyond inconvenience seems really to have been caused by them; and inconvenience, as I have said, is only one aspect, and that the most unimaginative and accidental aspect of a really romantic situation. An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered. The water that girdled the houses and shops of London must, if anything, have only increased their previous witchery and wonder. For as the Roman Catholic priest in the story said: "Wine is good with everything except water," and on a similar principle, water is good with everything except wine.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH

IT is obvious that there is a great deal of difference between being international and being cosmopolitan. All good men are international. Nearly all bad men are cosmopolitan. If we are to be international we must be national. And it is largely because those who call themselves the friends of peace have not dwelt sufficiently on this distinction that they do not impress the bulk of any of the nations to which they belong. International peace means a peace between nations, not a peace after the destruction of nations, like the Buddhist peace after the destruction of personality. The golden age of the good European is like the heaven of the Christian: it is a place where people will love each other; not like the heaven of the Hindu, a place where they will be each other. And in the case of national character this can be seen in a curious way. It will generally be found, I think, that the more a man really appreciates and admires the soul of another people the less he will attempt to imitate it; he will be conscious that there is something in it too deep and too unmanageable to imitate. The Englishman who has a fancy for France will try to be French; the Englishman who admires France will remain obstinately English. This is to be particularly noticed in the case of our relations with the French, because it is one of the outstanding peculiarities of the French that their vices are all on the surface, and their

extraordinary virtues concealed. One might almost say that their vices are the flower of their virtues.

Thus their obscenity is the expression of their passionate love of dragging all things into the light. The avarice of their peasants means the independence of their peasants. What the English call their rudeness in the streets is a phase of their social equality. The worried look of their women is connected with the responsibility of their women; and a certain unconscious brutality of hurry and gesture in the men is related to their inexhaustible and extraordinary military courage. Of all countries, therefore, France is the worst country for a superficial fool to admire. Let a fool hate France: if the fool loves it he will soon be a knave. He will certainly admire it, not only for the things that are not creditable, but actually for the things that are not there. He will admire the grace and indolence of the most industrious people in the world. He will admire the romance and fantasy of the most determinedly respectable and commonplace people in the world. This mistake the Englishman will make if he admires France too hastily; but the mistake that he makes about France will be slight compared with the mistake that he makes about himself. An Englishman who professes really to like French realistic novels, really to be at home in a French modern theatre, really to experience no shock on first seeing the savage French caricatures, is making a mistake very dangerous for his own sincerity. He is admiring something he does not understand. He is reaping where he has not sown, and taking up where he has not laid down; he is trying to taste the fruit when he had never toiled over the tree. He is

trying to pluck the exquisite fruit of French cynicism, when he has never tilled the rude but rich soil of French virtue.

The thing can only be made clear to Englishmen by turning it round. Suppose a Frenchman came out of democratic France to live in England, where the shadow of the great houses still falls everywhere and where even freedom was, in its origin, aristocratic. If the Frenchman saw our aristocracy and liked it, if he saw our snobbishness and liked it, if he set himself to imitate it, we all know what we should feel. We all know that we should feel that that particular Frenchman was a repulsive little gnat. He would be imitating English aristocracy; he would be imitating the English vice. But he would not even understand the vice he plagiarised: especially he would not understand that the vice is partly a virtue. He would not understand those elements in the English which balance snobbishness and make it human: the great kindness of the English, their hospitality, their unconscious poetry, their sentimental conservatism, which really admires the gentry. The French Royalist sees that the English like their King. But he does not grasp that while it is base to worship a King, it is almost noble to worship a powerless King. The impotence of the Hanoverian Sovereigns had raised the English loyal subject almost to the chivalry and dignity of a Jacobite. The Frenchman sees that the English servant is respectful; he does not realise that he is also disrespectful; that there is an English legend of the humorous and faithful servant, who is as much a personality as his master; the Caleb Balderstone, the Sam Weller. He sees that the English do admire

a nobleman; he does not allow for the fact that they admire a nobleman most when he does not behave like one. They like a noble to be unconscious and amiable: the slave may be humble, but the master must not be proud. The master is Life, as they would like to enjoy it; and among the joys they desire in him there is none which they desire more sincerely than that of generosity, of throwing money about among mankind, or, to use the noble mediæval word, largesse—the joy of largeness. That is why a cabman tells you you are no gentleman if you give him his correct fare. Not only his pocket but his soul, is hurt. You have wounded his ideal. You have defaced his vision of the perfect aristocrat. All this is really very subtle and elusive; it is very difficult to separate what is mere slavishness from what is a sort of vicarious nobility in the English love of a lord. And no Frenchman could easily grasp it at all. He would think it was mere slavishness; and if he liked it, he would be a slave. So every Englishman must (at first) feel French candour to be mere brutality. And if he likes it, he is a brute. These national merits must not be understood so easily. It requires long years of plenitude and quiet, the slow growth of great parks, the seasoning of oaken beams, the dark enrichment of red wine in cellars and in inns, all the leisure and the life of England through many centuries, to produce at last the generous and genial fruit of English snobbishness. And it requires battery and barricade, songs in the streets, and ragged men dead for an idea, to produce and justify the terrible flower of French indecency.

When I was in Paris a short time ago, I went with an English friend of mine to an extremely

brilliant and rapid succession of French plays, each occupying about twenty minutes. They were all astonishingly effective; but there was one of them which was so effective that my friend and I fought about it outside, and had almost to be separated by the police. It was intended to indicate how men really behaved in a wreck or naval disaster, how they break down, how they scream, how they fight each other without object and in a mere hatred of everything. And then there was added, with all that horrible irony which Voltaire began, a scene in which a great statesman made a speech over their bodies, saying that they were all heroes and had died in a fraternal embrace. My friend and I came out of this theatre, and as he had lived long in Paris, he said, like a Frenchman: "What admirable artistic arrangement! Is it not exquisite?" "No," I replied, assuming as far as possible the traditional attitude of John Bull in the pictures in *Punch*—"No, it is not exquisite. Perhaps it is unmeaning; if it is unmeaning I do not mind. But if it has a meaning I know what the meaning is; it is that under all their pageant of chivalry men are not only beasts, but even hunted beasts. I do not know much of humanity, especially when humanity talks in French. But I know when a thing is meant to uplift the human soul, and when it is meant to depress it. I know that 'Cyrano de Bergerac' (where the actors talked even quicker) was meant to encourage man. And I know that this was meant to discourage him." "These sentimental and moral views of art," began my friend, but I broke into his words as a light broke into my mind. "Let me say to you," I said, "what Jaurès said to Liebknecht at the Socialist

Conference: 'You have not died on the barricades. You are an Englishman, as I am, and you ought to be as amiable as I am. These people have some right to be terrible in art, for they have been terrible in politics. They may endure mock tortures on the stage; they have seen real tortures in the streets. They have been hurt for the idea of Democracy. They have been hurt for the idea of Catholicism. It is not so utterly unnatural to them that they should be hurt for the idea of literature. But, by blazes, it is altogether unnatural to me! And the worst thing of all is that I, who am an Englishman, loving comfort, should find comfort in such things as this. The French do not seek comfort here, but rather unrest. This restless people seeks to keep itself in a perpetual agony of the revolutionary mood. Frenchmen, seeking revolution, may find the humiliation of humanity inspiring. But God forbid that two pleasure-seeking Englishmen should ever find it pleasant!"

THE BOY

I HAVE no sympathy with international aggression when it is taken seriously, but I have a certain dark and wild sympathy with it when it is quite absurd. Raids are all wrong as practical politics, but they are human and imaginable as practical jokes. In fact, almost any act of ragging or violence can be forgiven on this strict condition—that it is of no use at all to anybody. If the aggressor gets anything out of it, then it is quite unpardonable. It is damned by the least hint of utility or profit. A man of spirit and breeding may brawl, but he does not steal. A gentleman knocks off his friend's hat; but he does not annex his friend's hat. For this reason (as Mr. Belloc has pointed out somewhere), the very militant French people have always returned after their immense raids—the raids of Godfrey the Crusader, the raids of Napoleon; “they are sucked back, having accomplished nothing but an epic.”

Sometimes I see small fragments of information in the newspapers which make my heart leap with an irrational patriotic sympathy. I have had the misfortune to be left comparatively cold by many of the enterprises and proclamations of my country in recent times. But the other day I found in the *Tribune* the following paragraph, which I may be permitted to set down as an example of the kind of international outrage with which I have by far the most instinctive sympathy. There is some-

thing attractive, too, in the austere simplicity with which the affair is set forth—

“Geneva, Oct. 31.

“The English schoolboy Allen, who was arrested at Lausanne railway station on Saturday, for having painted red the statue of General Jomini of Payerne, was liberated yesterday, after paying a fine of £24. Allen has proceeded to Germany, where he will continue his studies. The people of Payerne are indignant, and clamoured for his detention in prison.”

Now I have no doubt that ethics and social necessity require a contrary attitude, but I will freely confess that my first emotions on reading of this exploit were those of profound and elemental pleasure. There is something so large and simple about the operation of painting a whole stone General a bright red. Of course I can understand that the people of Payerne were indignant. They had passed to their homes at twilight through the streets of that beautiful city (or is it a province?), and they had seen against the silver ending of the sunset the grand grey figure of the hero of that land remaining to guard the town under the stars. It certainly must have been a shock to come out in the broad white morning and find a large vermilion General staring under the staring sun. I do not blame them at all for clamouring for the schoolboy's detention in prison; I dare say a little detention in prison would do him no harm. Still, I think the immense act has something about it human and excusable; and when I endeavour to analyse the reason of this feeling I find it to lie, not in the fact that the thing

was big or bold or successful, but in the fact that the thing was perfectly useless to everybody, including the person who did it. The raid ends in itself; and so Master Allen is sucked back again, having accomplished nothing but an epic.

There is one thing which, in the presence of average modern journalism, is perhaps worth saying in connection with such an idle matter as this. The morals of a matter like this are exactly like the morals of anything else; they are concerned with mutual contract, or with the rights of independent human lives. But the whole modern world, or at any rate the whole modern Press, has a perpetual and consuming terror of plain morals. Men always attempt to avoid condemning a thing upon merely moral grounds. If I beat my grandmother to death to-morrow in the middle of Battersea Park, you may be perfectly certain that people will say everything about it except the simple and fairly obvious fact that it is wrong. Some will call it insane; that is, will accuse it of a deficiency of intelligence. This is not necessarily true at all. You could not tell whether the act was unintelligent or not, unless you knew my grandmother. Some will call it vulgar, disgusting, and the rest of it; that is, they will accuse it of a lack of manners. Perhaps it does show a lack of manners; but this is scarcely its most serious disadvantage. Others will talk about the loathsome spectacle and the revolting scene; that is, they will accuse it of a deficiency of art, or æsthetic beauty. This again depends on the circumstances: in order to be quite certain that the appearance of the old lady has definitely deteriorated under the process of being beaten

THE BOY

to death, it is necessary for the philosophical critic to be quite certain how ugly she was before. Another school of thinkers will say that the action is lacking in efficiency: that it is an uneconomic waste of a good grandmother. But that could only depend on the value, which is again an individual matter. The only real point that is worth mentioning is that the action is wicked, because your grandmother has a right not to be beaten to death. But of this simple moral explanation modern journalism has, as I say, a standing fear. It will call the action anything else—mad, bestial, vulgar, idiotic, rather than call it sinful.

One example can be found in such cases as that of the prank of the boy and the statue. When some trick of this sort is played, the newspapers opposed to it always describe it as "a senseless joke." What is the good of saying that? Every joke is a senseless joke. A joke is by its nature a protest against sense. It is no good attacking nonsense for being successfully nonsensical. Of course it is nonsensical to paint a celebrated Italian General a bright red; it is as nonsensical as "Alice in Wonderland." It is also, in my opinion, very nearly as funny. But the real answer to the affair is not to say that it is nonsensical or even to say that it is not funny, but to point out that it is wrong to spoil statues which belong to other people. If the modern world will not insist on having some sharp and definite moral law, capable of resisting the counter-attractions of art and humour, the modern world will simply be given over as a spoil to anybody who can manage to do a nasty thing in a nice way. Every murderer who can murder entertainingly will be allowed to murder. Every burglar

who burgles in really humorous attitudes will burgle as much as he likes.

There is another case of the thing that I mean. Why on earth do the newspapers, in describing a dynamite outrage or any other political assassination, call it a "dastardly outrage" or a cowardly outrage? It is perfectly evident that it is not dastardly in the least. It is perfectly evident that it is about as cowardly as the Christians going to the lions. The man who does it exposes himself to the chance of being torn in pieces by two thousand people. What the thing is, is not cowardly, but profoundly and detestably wicked. The man who does it is very infamous and very brave. But, again, the explanation is that our modern Press would rather appeal to physical arrogance, or to anything rather than appeal to right and wrong.

In most of the matters of modern England, the real difficulty is that there is a negative revolution without a positive revolution. Positive aristocracy is breaking up without any particular appearance of positive democracy taking its place. The polished class is becoming less polished without becoming less of a class; the nobleman who becomes a guinea-pig keeps all his privileges but loses some of his tradition; he becomes less of a gentleman without becoming less of a nobleman. In the same way (until some recent and happy revivals) it seemed highly probable that the Church of England would cease to be a religion long before it had ceased to be a Church. And in the same way, the vulgarisation of the old, simple middle class does not even have the advantage of doing away with class distinctions; the vulgar man is always the most distinguished, for the very desire to be distinguished is vulgar.

At the same time, it must be remembered that when a class has a morality it does not follow that it is an adequate morality. The middle-class ethic was inadequate for some purposes; so is the public-school ethic, the ethic of the upper classes. On this last matter of the public schools Dr. Spenser, the Head Master of University College School, has lately made some valuable observations. But even he, I think, overstates the claim of the public schools. "The strong point of the English public schools," he says, "has always lain in their efficiency as agencies for the formation of character and for the inculcation of the great notion of obligation which distinguishes a gentleman. On the physical and moral sides the public-school men of England are, I believe, unequalled." And he goes on to say that it is on the mental side that they are defective. But, as a matter of fact, the public-school training is in the strict sense defective upon the moral side also; it leaves out about half of morality. Its just claim is that, like the old middle-class (and the Zulus), it trains some virtues and therefore suits some people for some situations. Put an old English merchant to serve in an army and he would have been irritated and clumsy. Put the men from English public schools to rule Ireland, and they make the greatest hash in human history.

Touching the morality of the public schools, I will take one point only, which is enough to prove the case. People have got into their heads an extraordinary idea that English public school-boys and English youth generally are taught to tell the truth. They are taught absolutely nothing of the kind. At no English public school is it even suggested, except by accident, that it is a man's

duty to tell the truth. What is suggested is something entirely different: that it is a man's duty not to tell lies. So completely does this mistake soak through all civilisation that we hardly ever think even of the difference between the two things. When we say to a child, "You must tell the truth," we do merely mean that he must refrain from verbal inaccuracies. But the thing we never teach at all is the general duty of telling the truth, of giving a complete and fair picture of anything we are talking about, of not misrepresenting, not evading, not suppressing, not using plausible arguments that we know to be unfair, not selecting unscrupulously to prove an *ex parte* case, not telling all the nice stories about the Scotch, and all the nasty stories about the Irish, not pretending to be disinterested when you are really angry, not pretending to be angry when you are really only avaricious. The one thing that is never taught by any chance in the atmosphere of public schools is exactly that—that there is a whole truth of things, and that in knowing it and speaking it we are happy.

If any one has the smallest doubt of this neglect of truth in public schools he can kill his doubt with one plain question. Can any one on earth believe that if the seeing and telling of the whole truth were really one of the ideals of the English governing class, there could conceivably exist such a thing as the English party system? Why, the English party system is founded upon the principle that telling the whole truth does not matter. It is founded upon the principle that half a truth is better than no politics. Our system deliberately turns a crowd of men who might

THE BOY

be impartial into irrational partisans. It teaches some of them to tell lies and all of them to believe lies. It gives every man an arbitrary brief that he has to work up as best he may and defend as best he can. It turns a room full of citizens into a room full of barristers. I know that it has many charms and virtues, fighting and good-fellowship; it has all the charms and virtues of a game. I only say that it would be a stark impossibility in a nation which believed in telling the truth.

PHONETIC SPELLING

A CORRESPONDENT asks me to make more lucid my remarks about phonetic spelling. I have no detailed objection to items of spelling-reform: my objection is to a general principle; and it is this. It seems to me that what is really wrong with all modern and highly civilised language is that it does so largely consist of dead words. Half our speech consists of similes that remind us of no similarity; of pictorial phrases that call up no picture; of historical allusions the origin of which we have forgotten. Take any instance on which the eye happens to alight. I saw in the paper some days ago that the well-known leader of a certain religious party wrote to a supporter of his the following curious words: "I have not forgotten the talented way in which you held up the banner at Birkenhead." Taking the ordinary vague meaning of the word "talented," there is no coherency in the picture. The trumpets blow, the spears shake and glitter, and in the thick of the purple battle there stands a gentleman holding up a banner in a talented way. And when we come to the original force of the word "talent" the matter is worse: a talent is a Greek coin used in the New Testament as a symbol of the mental capital committed to an individual at birth. If the religious leader in question had really meant anything by his phrases, he would have been puzzled to know how a man could use a Greek coin to hold up a banner. But really he meant nothing by his

PHONETIC SPELLING

phrases. "Holding up the banner" was to him a colourless term for doing the proper thing, and "talented" was a colourless term for doing it successfully.

Now my own fear touching anything in the way of phonetic spelling is that it would simply increase this tendency to use words as counters and not as coins. The original life in a word (as in the word "talent") burns low as it is: sensible spelling might extinguish it altogether. Suppose any sentence you like: suppose a man says, "Republics generally encourage holidays." It looks like the top line of a copy-book. Now, it is perfectly true that if you wrote that sentence exactly as it is pronounced, even by highly educated people, the sentence would run: "Ripubliks jenrally inkurrij hollidies." It looks ugly: but I have not the smallest objection to ugliness. My objection is that these four words have each a history and hidden treasures in them: that this history and hidden treasure (which we tend to forget too much as it is) phonetic spelling tends to make us forget altogether. Republic does not mean merely a mode of political choice. Republic (as we see when we look at the structure of the word) means the Public Thing: the abstraction which is us all.

A Republican is not a man who wants a Constitution with a President. A Republican is a man who prefers to think of Government as impersonal; he is opposed to the Royalist, who prefers to think of Government as personal. Take the second word, "generally." This is always used as meaning "in the majority of cases." But, again, if we look at the shape and spelling of the word, we shall see that "generally" means something more like

"generically," and is akin to such words as "generation" or "regenerate." "Pigs are generally dirty" does not mean that pigs are, in the majority of cases, dirty, but that pigs as a race or genus are dirty, that pigs as pigs are dirty—an important philosophical distinction. Take the third word, "encourage." The word "encourage" is used in such modern sentences in the merely automatic sense of promote; to encourage poetry means merely to advance or assist poetry. But to encourage poetry means properly to put courage into poetry—a fine idea. Take the fourth word, "holidays." As long as that word remains, it will always answer the ignorant slander which asserts that religion was opposed to human cheerfulness; that word will always assert that when a day is holy it should also be happy. Properly spelt, these words all tell a sublime story, like Westminster Abbey. Phonetically spelt, they might lose the last traces of any such story. "Generally" is an exalted metaphysical term; "jenrally" is not. If you "encourage" a man, you pour into him the chivalry of a hundred princes; this does not happen if you merely "inkurrij" him. "Republics," if spelt phonetically, might actually forget to be public. "Holidays," if spelt phonetically, might actually forget to be holy.

Here is a case that has just occurred. A certain magistrate told somebody whom he was examining in court that he or she "should always be polite to the police." I do not know whether the magistrate noticed the circumstance, but the word "polite" and the word "police" have the same origin and meaning. Politeness means the atmosphere and ritual of the city, the symbol of human civilisation. The policeman means the representa-

tive and guardian of the city, the symbol of human civilisation. Yet it may be doubted whether the two ideas are commonly connected in the mind. It is probable that we often hear of politeness without thinking of a policeman; it is even possible that our eyes often alight upon a policeman without our thoughts instantly flying to the subject of politeness. Yet the idea of the sacred city is not only the link of them both, it is the only serious justification and the only serious corrective of them both. If politeness means too often a mere frippery, it is because it has not enough to do with serious patriotism and public dignity; if policemen are coarse or casual, it is because they are not sufficiently convinced that they are the servants of the beautiful city and the agents of sweetness and light. Politeness is not really a frippery. Politeness is not really even a thing merely suave and deprecating. Politeness is an armed guard, stern and splendid and vigilant, watching over all the ways of men; in other words, politeness is a policeman. A policeman is not merely a heavy man with a truncheon: a policeman is a machine for the smoothing and sweetening of the accidents of everyday existence. In other words, a policeman is politeness: a veiled image of politeness—sometimes impenetrably veiled. But my point is here that by losing the original idea of the city, which is the force and youth of both the words, both the things actually degenerate. Our politeness loses all manliness because we forget that politeness is only the Greek for patriotism. Our policemen lose all delicacy because we forget that a policeman is only the Greek for something civilised. A policeman should often have the functions of a knight-errant.

A policeman should always have the elegance of a knight-errant. But I am not sure that he would succeed any the better in remembering this obligation of romantic grace if his name were spelt phonetically. Supposing that it could be spelt phonetically. Some spelling-reformers, I am told, in the poorer parts of London do spell his name phonetically, very phonetically. They call him a "plecceman." Thus the whole romance of the ancient city disappears from the word; and the policeman's reverent courtesy of demeanour deserts him quite suddenly. This does seem to me the case against any extreme revolution in spelling. If you spell a word wrong you have some temptation to think it wrong.

WINE WHEN IT IS RED

I SUPPOSE that there will be some wigs on the green in connection with the recent manifesto signed by a string of very eminent doctors on the subject of what is called "alcohol." "Alcohol" is, to judge by the sound of it, an Arabic word, like "algebra" and "Alhambra," those two other unpleasant things. The Alhambra in Spain I have never seen; I am told that it is a low and rambling building; I allude to the far more dignified erection in Leicester Square. If it is true, as I surmise, that "alcohol" is a word of the Arabs, it is interesting to realise that our general word for the essence of wine and beer and such things comes from a people which has made particular war upon them. I suppose that some aged Moslem chieftain sat one day at the opening of his tent and, brooding with black brows and cursing in his black beard over wine as the symbol of Christianity, racked his brains for some word ugly enough to express his racial and religious antipathy, and suddenly spat out the horrible word "alcohol." The fact that the doctors had to use this word for the sake of scientific clearness was really a great disadvantage to them in fairly discussing the matter. For the word really involves one of those beggings of the question which make these moral matters so difficult. It is quite a mistake to suppose that, when a man desires an alcoholic drink, he necessarily desires alcohol.

Let a man walk ten miles steadily on a hot

summer's day along a dusty English road, and he will soon discover why beer was invented. The fact that beer has a very slight stimulating quality will be quite among the smallest reasons that induce him to ask for it. In short, he will not be in the least desiring alcohol; he will be desiring beer. But, of course, the question cannot be settled in such a simple way. The real difficulty which confronts everybody, and which especially confronts doctors, is that the extraordinary position of man in the physical universe makes it practically impossible to treat him in either one direction or the other in a purely physical way. Man is an exception, whatever else he is. If he is not the image of God, then he is a disease of the dust. If it is not true that a divine being fell, then we can only say that one of the animals went entirely off its head. In neither case can we really argue very much from the body of man simply considered as the body of an innocent and healthy animal. His body has got too much mixed up with his soul, as we see in the supreme instance of sex. It may be worth while uttering the warning to wealthy philanthropists and idealists that this argument from the animal should not be thoughtlessly used, even against the atrocious evils of excess; it is an argument that proves too little or too much. Doubtless, it is unnatural to be drunk. But then in a real sense it is unnatural to be human. Doubtless, the intemperate workman wastes his tissues in drinking; but no one knows how much the sober workman wastes his tissues by working. No one knows how much the wealthy philanthropist wastes his tissues by talking; or, in much rarer conditions, by thinking. All the human things are more dangerous than anything that affects the

WINE WHEN IT IS RED

beasts—sex, poetry, property, religion. The real case against drunkenness is not that it calls up the beast, but that it calls up the Devil. It does not call up the beast, and if it did it would not matter much, as a rule; the beast is a harmless and rather amiable creature, as anybody can see by watching cattle. There is nothing bestial about intoxication; and certainly there is nothing intoxicating or even particularly lively about beasts. Man is always something worse or something better than an animal; and a mere argument from animal perfection never touches him at all. Thus, in sex no animal is either chivalrous or obscene. And thus no animal ever invented anything so bad as drunkenness—or so good as drink.

The pronouncement of these particular doctors is very clear and uncompromising; in the modern atmosphere, indeed, it even deserves some credit for moral courage. The majority of modern people, of course, will probably agree with it in so far as it declares that alcoholic drinks are often of supreme value in emergencies of illness; but many people, I fear, will open their eyes at the emphatic terms in which they describe such drink as considered as a beverage; but they are not content with declaring that the drink is in moderation harmless: they distinctly declare that it is in moderation beneficial. But I fancy that, in saying this, the doctors had in mind a truth that runs somewhat counter to the common opinion. I fancy that it is the experience of most doctors that giving any alcohol for illness (though often necessary) is about the most morally dangerous way of giving it. Instead of giving it to a healthy person who has many other forms of life, you are giving it to a desperate person, to

whom it is the only form of life. The invalid can hardly be blamed if by some accident of his erratic and overwrought condition he comes to remember the thing as the very water of vitality and to use it as such. For in so far as drinking is really a sin it is not because drinking is wild, but because drinking is tame; not in so far as it is anarchy, but in so far as it is slavery. Probably the worst way to drink is to drink medicinally. Certainly the safest way to drink is to drink carelessly; that is, without caring much for anything, and especially not caring for the drink.

The doctor, of course, ought to be able to do a great deal in the way of restraining those individual cases where there is plainly an evil thirst; and beyond that the only hope would seem to be in some increase, or, rather, some concentration of ordinary public opinion on the subject. I have always held consistently my own modest theory on the subject. I believe that if by some method the local public-house could be as definite and isolated a place as the local post-office or the local railway station, if all types of people passed through it for all types of refreshment, you would have the same safeguard against a man behaving in a disgusting way in a tavern that you have at present against his behaving in a disgusting way in a post-office: simply the presence of his ordinary sensible neighbours. In such a place the kind of lunatic who wants to drink an unlimited number of whiskies would be treated with the same severity with which the post office authorities would treat an amiable lunatic who had an appetite for licking an unlimited number of stamps. It is a small matter whether in either case a technical refusal would be officially employed. It

WINE WHEN IT IS RED

is an essential matter that in both cases the authorities could rapidly communicate with the friends and family of the mentally afflicted person. At least, the postmistress would not dangle a strip of tempting sixpenny stamps before the enthusiast's eyes as he was being dragged away with his tongue out. If we made drinking open and official we might be taking one step towards making it careless. In such things to be careless is to be sane: for neither drunkards nor Moslems can be careless about drink.

A PIECE OF CHALK

I REMEMBER one splendid morning, all blue and silver, in the summer holidays, when I reluctantly tore myself away from the task of doing nothing in particular, and put on a hat of some sort and picked up a walking-stick, and put six very bright-coloured chalks in my pocket. I then went into the kitchen (which, along with the rest of the house, belonged to a very square and sensible old woman in a Sussex village), and asked the owner and occupant of the kitchen if she had any brown paper. She had a great deal; in fact, she had too much; and she mistook the purpose and the rationale of the existence of brown paper. She seemed to have an idea that if a person wanted brown paper he must be wanting to tie up parcels; which was the last thing I wanted to do; indeed, it is a thing which I have found to be beyond my mental capacity. Hence she dwelt very much on the varying qualities of toughness and endurance in the material. I explained to her that I only wanted to draw pictures on it, and that I did not want them to endure in the least; and that from my point of view, therefore, it was a question not of tough consistency, but of responsive surface, a thing comparatively irrelevant in a parcel. When she understood that I wanted to draw she offered to overwhelm me with note-paper, apparently supposing that I did my notes and correspondence on old brown paper wrappers from motives of economy.

I then tried to explain the rather delicate logical

A PIECE OF CHALK

shade, that I not only liked brown paper, but liked the quality of brownness in paper, just as I liked the quality of brownness in October woods, or in beer, or in the peat-streams of the North. Brown paper represents the primal twilight of the first toil of creation, and with a bright-coloured chalk or two you can pick out points of fire in it, sparks of gold, and blood-red, and sea-green, like the first fierce stars that sprang out of divine darkness. All this I said (in an off-hand way) to the old woman; and I put the brown paper in my pocket along with the chalks, and possibly other things. I suppose every one must have reflected how primeval and how poetical are the things that one carries in one's pocket; the pocket-knife, for instance, the type of all human tools, the infant of the sword. Once I planned to write a book of poems entirely about the things in my pocket. But I found it would be too long; and the age of the great epics is past.

With my stick and my knife, my chalks and my brown paper, I went out on to the great downs. I crawled across those colossal contours that express the best quality of England, because they are at the same time soft and strong. The smoothness of them has the same meaning as the smoothness of great cart-horses, or the smoothness of the beech tree; it declares in the teeth of our timid and cruel theories that the mighty are merciful. As my eye swept the landscape, the landscape was as kindly as any of its cottages, but for power it was like an earthquake. The villages in the immense valley were safe, one could see, for centuries; yet the lifting of the whole land was like the lifting of one enormous wave to wash them all away.

I crossed one swell of living turf after another, looking for a place to sit down and draw. Do not, for heaven's sake, imagine I was going to sketch from Nature. I was going to draw devils and seraphim, and blind old gods that men worshipped before the dawn of right, and saints in robes of angry crimson, and seas of strange green, and all the sacred or monstrous symbols that look so well in bright colours on brown paper. They are much better worth drawing than Nature; also they are much easier to draw. When a cow came slouching by in the field next to me, a mere artist might have drawn it; but I always get wrong in the hind legs of quadrupeds. So I drew the soul of the cow; which I saw there plainly walking before me in the sunlight; and the soul was all purple and silver, and had seven horns and the mystery that belongs to all the beasts. But though I could not with a crayon get the best out of the landscape, it does not follow that the landscape was not getting the best out of me. And this, I think, is the mistake that people make about the old poets who lived before Wordsworth, and were supposed not to care very much about Nature because they did not describe it much.

They preferred writing about great men to writing about great hills; but they sat on the great hills to write it. They gave out much less about Nature, but they drank in, perhaps, much more. They painted the white robes of their holy virgins with the blinding snow, at which they had stared all day. They blazoned the shields of their paladins with the purple and gold of many heraldic sunsets. The greenness of a thousand green leaves clustered into the live green figure of Robin Hood. The

A PIECE OF CHALK

blueness of a score of forgotten skies became the blue robes of the Virgin. The inspiration went in like sunbeams and came out like Apollo.

But as I sat scrawling these silly figures on the brown paper, it began to dawn on me, to my great disgust, that I had left one chalk, and that a most exquisite and essential chalk, behind. I searched all my pockets, but I could not find any white chalk. Now, those who are acquainted with all the philosophy (nay, religion) which is typified in the art of drawing on brown paper, know that white is positive and essential. I cannot avoid remarking here upon a moral significance. One of the wise and awful truths which this brown-paper art reveals, is this, that white is a colour. It is not a mere absence of colour; it is a shining and affirmative thing, as fierce as red, as definite as black. When (so to speak) your pencil grows red-hot, it draws roses; when it grows white-hot, it draws stars. And one of the two or three defiant verities of the best religious morality, of real Christianity, for example, is exactly this same thing; the chief assertion of religious morality is that white is a colour. Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral dangers; virtue is a vivid and separate thing, like pain or a particular smell. Mercy does not mean not being cruel or sparing people revenge or punishment; it means a plain and positive thing like the sun, which one has either seen or not seen. Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc. In a word, God paints in many colours; but He never paints so gorgeously, I had almost said so gaudily, as when He paints in white. In a sense, our age has

realized this fact, and expressed it in our sullen costume. For if it were really true that white was a blank and colourless thing, negative and non-committal, then white would be used instead of black and grey for the funeral dress of this pessimistic period. We should see city gentlemen in frock-coats of spotless silver satin, with top hats as white as wonderful arum lilies. Which is not the case.

Meanwhile, I could not find my chalk.

I sat on the hill in a sort of despair. There was no town nearer than Chichester at which it was even remotely probable that there would be such a thing as an artist's colourman. And yet, without white, my absurd little pictures would be as pointless as the world would be if there were no good people in it. I stared stupidly round, racking my brain for expedients. Then I suddenly stood up and roared with laughter, again and again, so that the cows stared at me and called a committee. Imagine a man in the Sahara regretting that he had no sand for his hour-glass. Imagine a gentleman in mid-ocean wishing that he had brought some salt water with him for his chemical experiments. I was sitting on an immense warehouse of white chalk. The landscape was made entirely out of white chalk. White chalk was piled mere miles until it met the sky. I stooped and broke a piece off the rock I sat on: it did not mark so well as the shop chalks do; but it gave the effect. And I stood there in a trance of pleasure, realizing that this Southern England is not only a grand peninsula, and a tradition and a civilization; it is something even more admirable. It is a piece of chalk.

THE SECRET OF A TRAIN

I WILL not say that this story is true: because, as you will soon see, it is all truth and no story. It has no explanation and no conclusion; it is, like most of the other things we encounter in life, a fragment of something else which would be intensely exciting if it were not too large to be seen. For the perplexity of life arises from there being too many interesting things in it for us to be interested properly in any of them. What we call its triviality is really the tag-ends of numberless tales; ordinary and unmeaning existence is like ten thousand thrilling detective stories mixed up with a spoon. My experience was a fragment of this nature, and it is, at any rate, not fictitious. Not only am I not making up the incidents (what there were of them), but I am not making up the atmosphere or the landscape, which were the whole horror of the thing. I remember them vividly, and they were truly as I shall now describe.

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About noon of an ashen autumn day some years ago I was standing outside the station at Oxford intending to take the train to London. And for some reason, out of idleness or the emptiness of my mind or the emptiness of the pale grey sky, or the cold, a kind of caprice fell upon me that I would not go by that train at all, but would step out on the road and walk at least some part of the way to London. I do not know if other people are made like me in this matter; but for me it is always

dreary weather, what may be called useless weather, that stings into life a sense of action and romance. On bright blue days I do not want anything to happen; the world is complete and beautiful, a thing for contemplation. I no more ask for adventures under that turquoise dome than I ask for adventures in church. But when the background of man's life is a grey background, then, in the name of man's sacred supremacy, I desire to paint on it in fire and gore. When the heavens fail man refuses to fail; when the sky seems to have written on it, in letters of lead and pale silver, the decree that nothing shall happen, then the immortal soul, the prince of the creatures, rises up and decrees that something shall happen, if it be only the slaughter of a policeman. But this is a digressive way of stating what I have said already— that the bleak sky awoke in me a hunger for some change of plans, that the monotonous weather seemed to render unbearable the use of the monotonous train, and that I set out into the country lanes, out of the town of Oxford. It was, perhaps, at that moment that a strange curse came upon me out of the city and the sky, whereby it was decreed that years afterwards I should, in an article in the *Daily News*, talk about Sir George Trevelyan in connection with Oxford, when I knew perfectly well that he went to Cambridge.

As I crossed the country everything was ghostly and colourless. The fields that should have been green were as grey as the skies; the tree-tops that should have been green were as grey as the clouds and as cloudy. And when I had walked for some hours the evening was closing in. A sickly sunset clung weakly to the horizon, as if pale with reluct-

ance to leave the world in the dark. And as it faded more and more the skies seemed to come closer and to threaten. The clouds which had been merely sullen became swollen; and then they loosened and let down the dark curtains of the rain. The rain was blinding and seemed to beat like blows from an enemy at close quarters; the skies seemed bending over and bawling in my ears. I walked on many more miles before I met a man; in that distance my mind had been made up; and when I met him I asked him if anywhere in the neighbourhood I could pick up the train for Paddington. He directed me to a small silent station (I cannot even remember the name of it) which stood well away from the road and looked as lonely as a hut on the Andes. I do not think I have ever seen such a type of time and sadness and scepticism and everything devilish as that station was: it looked as if it had always been raining there ever since the creation of the world. The water streamed from the soaking wood of it as if it were not water at all, but some loathsome liquid corruption of the wood itself; as if the solid station were eternally falling to pieces and pouring away in filth. It took me nearly ten minutes to find a man in the station. When I did he was a dull one, and when I asked him if there was a train to Paddington his answer was sleepy and vague. As far as I understood him, he said there would be a train in half an hour. I sat down and lit a cigar and waited, watching the last tail of the tattered sunset and listening to the everlasting rain. It may have been in half an hour or less, but a train came rather slowly into the station. It was an unnaturally dark train; I could not see a light anywhere in the long black body of it; and I could not see any guard

running beside it. I was reduced to walking up to the engine and calling out to the stoker to ask if the train was going to London. "Well—yes, sir," he said, with an unaccountable kind of reluctance. "It is going to London; but——" It was just starting, and I jumped into the first carriage; it was pitch dark. I sat there smoking and wondering, as we steamed through the continually darkening landscape, lined with desolate poplars, until we slowed down and stopped, irrationally, in the middle of a field. I heard a heavy noise as of someone clambering off the train, and a dark, ragged head suddenly put itself into my window. "Excuse me, sir," said the stoker, "but I think, perhaps—well, perhaps you ought to know—there's a dead man in this train."

Had I been a true artist, a person of exquisite susceptibilities and nothing else, I should have been bound, no doubt, to be finally overwhelmed with this sensational touch, and to have insisted on getting out and walking. As it was, I regret to say, I expressed myself politely, but firmly, to the effect that I didn't care much so long as the train took me to Paddington. But when the train had started with its unknown burden I did do one thing, and do it quite instinctively, without stopping to think, or to think more than a flash. I threw away my cigar. Something that is as old as man and has to do with all mourning and ceremonial told me to do it. There was something unnecessarily horrible, it seemed to me, in the idea of there being only two men in that train, one of them dead and the other smoking a cigar. And as the red and gold of the butt end of it faded like a funeral torch

THE SECRET OF A TRAIN

trampled out at some symbolic moment of a procession, I realized how immortal ritual is. I realized the origin and essence of all ritual. That in the presence of those sacred riddles about which we can say nothing it is often more decent merely to do something. And I realized that ritual will always mean throwing away something; *destroying* our corn or wine upon the altar of our gods.

When the train panted at last into Paddington Station I sprang out of it with a suddenly released curiosity. There was a barrier and officials guarding the rear part of the train; no one was allowed to press towards it. They were guarding and hiding something; perhaps death in some too shocking form, perhaps something like the Merstham matter, so mixed up with human mystery and wickedness that the law has to give it a sort of sanctity; perhaps something worse than either. I went out gladly enough into the streets and saw the lamps shining on the laughing faces. Nor have I ever known from that day to this into what strange story I wandered or what frightful thing was my companion in the dark.

THE PERFECT GAME

WE have all met the man who says that some odd things have happened to him, but that he does not really believe that they were supernatural. My own position is the opposite of this. I believe in the supernatural as a matter of intellect and reason, not as a matter of personal experience. I do not see ghosts; I only see their inherent probability. But it is entirely a matter of the mere intelligence, not even of the emotions; my nerves and body are altogether of this earth, very earthy. But upon people of this temperament one weird incident will often leave a peculiar impression. And the weirdest circumstance that ever occurred to me occurred a little while ago. It consisted in nothing less than my playing a game, and playing it quite well for some seventeen consecutive minutes. The ghost of my grandfather would have astonished me less.

On one of these blue and burning afternoons I found myself, to my inexpressible astonishment, playing a game called croquet. I had imagined that it belonged to the epoch of Leech and Anthony Trollope, and I had neglected to provide myself with those very long and luxuriant side whiskers which are really essential to such a scene. I played it with a man whom we will call Parkinson, and with whom I had a semi-philosophical argument which lasted through the entire contest. It is deeply implanted in my mind that I had the best of the argument; but it is certain and beyond dispute that I had the worst of the game.

THE PERFECT GAME

"Oh, Parkinson, Parkinson!" I cried, patting him affectionately on the head with a mallet, "how far you really are from the pure love of the sport—you who can play. It is only we who play badly who love the Game itself. You love glory; you love applause; you love the earthquake voice of victory; you do not love croquet. You do not love croquet until you love being beaten at croquet. It is we the bunglers who adore the occupation in the abstract. It is we to whom it is art for art's sake. If we may see the face of Croquet herself (if I may so express myself) we are content to see her face turned upon us in anger. Our play is called amateurish; and we wear proudly the name of amateur, for amateurs is but the French for Lovers. We accept all adventures from our Lady, the most disastrous or the most dreary. We wait outside her iron gates (I allude to the hoops), vainly essaying to enter. Our devoted balls, impetuous and full of chivalry, will not be confined within the pedantic boundaries of the mere croquet ground. Our balls seek honour in the ends of the earth; they turn up in the flower-beds and the conservatory; they are to be found in the front garden and the next street. No, Parkinson! The good painter loves his skill. It is the bad painter who loves his art. The good musician loves being a musician; the bad musician loves music. With such a pure and hopeless passion do I worship croquet. I love the game itself. I love the parallelogram of grass marked out with chalk or tape, as if its limits were the frontiers of my sacred fatherland, the four seas of Britain. I love the mere swing of the mallets, and the click of the balls is music. The four colours are to me sacramental and symbolic, like the red of martyrdom,

or the white of Easter Day. You lose all this, my poor Parkinson. You have to solace yourself for the absence of this vision by the paltry consolation of being able to go through hoops and to hit the stick."

And I waved my mallet in the air with a graceful gaiety.

"Don't be too sorry for me," said Parkinson, with his simple sarcasm. "I shall get over it in time. But it seems to me that the more a man likes a game the better he would want to play it. Suppose the pleasure in the thing itself does come first, doesn't the pleasure of success come naturally and inevitably afterwards? Or, take your own simile of the Knight and his Lady-love. I admit the gentleman does first and foremost want to be, in the lady's presence. But I never heard of a gentleman who wanted to look an utter ass when he was there."

"Perhaps not; though he generally looks it," I replied. "But the truth is that there is a fallacy in the simile, although it was my own. The happiness at which the lover is aiming is an infinite happiness, which can be extended without limit. The more he is loved, normally speaking, the jollier he will be. It is definitely true that the stronger the love of both lovers, the stronger will be the happiness. But it is not true that the stronger the play of both croquet players the stronger will be the game. It is logically possible—(follow me closely here, Parkinson!)—it is logically possible, to play croquet too well to enjoy it at all. If you could put this blue ball through that distant hoop as easily as you could pick it up with your hand, then you would not put it through that hoop any more than you pick it up with your hand; it would not be worth doing. If you could play unerringly you would not play at all. The

THE PERFECT GAME

moment the game is perfect the game disappears."

"I do not think, however," said Parkinson, "that you are in any immediate danger of effecting that sort of destruction. I do not think your croquet will vanish through its own faultless excellence. You are safe for the present."

I again caressed him with the mallet, knocked a ball about, tired myself, and resumed the thread of my discourse.

The long, warm evening had been gradually closing in, and by this time it was almost twilight. By the time I had delivered four more fundamental principles, and my companion had gone through five more hoops, the dusk was verging upon dark.

"We shall have to give this up," said Parkinson, as he missed a ball almost for the first time. "I can't see a thing."

"Nor can I," I answered, "and it is a comfort to reflect that I could not hit anything if I saw it."

With that I struck a ball smartly, and sent it away into the darkness towards where the shadowy figure of Parkinson moved in the hot haze. Parkinson immediately uttered a loud and dramatic cry. The situation, indeed, called for it. I had hit the right ball.

Stunned with astonishment, I crossed the gloomy ground, and hit my ball again. It went through a hoop. I could not see the hoop; but it was the right hoop. I shuddered from head to foot.

Words were wholly inadequate, so I slouched heavily after that impossible ball. Again I hit it away into the night, in what I supposed was the vague direction of the quite invisible stick. And in the dead silence I heard the stick rattle as the ball struck it heavily.

I threw down my mallet. "I can't stand this," I said. "My ball has gone right three times. These things are not of this world."

"Pick your mallet up," said Parkinson; "have another go."

"I tell you I daren't. If I made another hoop like that I should see all the devils dancing there on the blessed grass."

"Why devils?" asked Parkinson; "they may be only fairies making fun of you. They are sending you the 'Perfect Game,' which is no game."

I looked about me. The garden was full of a burning darkness, in which the faint glimmers had the look of fire. I stepped across the grass as if it burnt me, picked up the mallet, and hit the ball somewhere—somewhere where another ball might be. I heard the dull click of the balls touching, and ran into the house like one pursued.

THE EXTRAORDINARY CABMAN

ON the day that I met the strange cabman I had been lunching in a little restaurant in Soho in company with three or four of my best friends. My best friends are all either bottomless sceptics or quite uncontrollable believers, so our discussion at luncheon turned upon the most ultimate and terrible ideas. And the whole argument worked out ultimately to this: that the question is whether a man can be certain of anything at all. I think he can be certain, for if (as I said to my friend, furiously brandishing an empty bottle) it is impossible intellectually to entertain certainty, what is this certainty which it is impossible to entertain? If I have never experienced such a thing as certainty I cannot even say that a thing is not certain. Similarly, if I have never experienced such a thing as green I cannot even say that my nose is not green. It may be as green as possible for all I know, if I have really no experience of greenness. So we shouted at each other and shook the room; because metaphysics is the only thoroughly emotional thing. And the difference between us was very deep, because it was a difference as to the object of the whole thing called broad-mindedness or the opening of the intellect. For my friend said that he opened his intellect as the sun opens the fans of a palm tree, opening for opening's sake, opening infinitely for ever. But I said that I opened my intellect as I opened my mouth, in order to shut it again on something solid. I was

doing it at the moment. And as I warmly pointed out, it would look uncommonly silly if I went on opening my mouth infinitely, for ever and ever.

Now when this argument was over, or at least when it was cut short (for it will never be over), I went away with one of my companions, who in the confusion and comparative insanity of a General Election had somehow become a Member of Parliament, and I drove with him in a cab from the corner of Leicester Square to the members' entrance of the House of Commons, where the police received me with a quite unusual tolerance. Whether they thought that he was my keeper or that I was his keeper is a discussion between us which still continues.

It is necessary in this narrative to preserve the utmost exactitude of detail. After leaving my friend at the House I took the cab on a few hundred yards to an office in Victoria Street which I had to visit. I then got out and offered him more than his fare. He looked at it, but not with the surly doubt and general disposition to try it on which is not unknown among normal cabmen. But this was no normal, perhaps, no human cabman. He looked, at it with a dull and infantile astonishment, clearly quite genuine. "Do you know, sir," he said, "you've only given me 1s. 8d.?" I remarked, with some surprise, that I did know it. "Now you know, sir," said he in a kindly, appealing, reasonable way, "you know that ain't the fare from Euston." "Euston," I repeated vaguely, for the phrase at that moment sounded to me like China or Arabia. "What on earth has Euston got to do with it?" "You hailed me just outside Euston Station,"

began the man, with astonishing precision, "and then you said——" "What in the name of Tartarus are you talking about?" I said, with Christian forbearance. "I took you at the south-west corner of Leicester Square." "Leicester Square," he exclaimed, loosening a kind of cataract of scorn; "why, we ain't been near Leicester Square to-day. You hailed me outside Euston Station, and you said——" "Are you mad, or am I?" I asked, with scientific calm.

I looked at the man. No ordinary dishonest cabman would think of creating so solid and colossal and creative a lie. And this man was not a dishonest cabman. If ever a human face was hearty and simple and humble, and with great big blue eyes protruding like a frog's, if ever (in short) a human face was all that a human face should be, it was the face of that resentful and respectful cabman. I looked up and down the street; an unusually dark twilight seemed to be coming on. And for one second the old nightmare of the sceptic put its finger on my nerve. What was certainty? Was anybody certain of anything? Heavens! to think of the dull rut of the sceptics who go on asking whether we possess a future life. The exciting question for real scepticism is whether we possess a past life. What is a minute ago, rationalistically considered, except a tradition and a picture? The darkness grew deeper from the road. The cabman calmly gave me the most elaborate details of the gesture, the words, the complex but consistent course of action which I had adopted since that remarkable occasion when I had hailed him outside Euston Station. How did I know (my sceptical friends would say) that

I had not hailed him outside Euston? I was firm about my assertion; he was quite equally firm about his. He was obviously quite as honest a man as I, and a member of a much more respectable profession. In that moment the universe and the stars swung just a hair's breadth from their balance, and the foundations of the earth were moved. But for the same reason that I believe in drinking wine, for the same reason that I believe in free will, for the same reason that I believe in fixed character of virtue, the reason that could only be expressed by saying that I do not choose to be a lunatic, I continued to believe that this honest cabman was wrong, and I repeated to him that I had really taken him at the corner of Leicester Square. He began with the same evident and ponderous sincerity, "You hailed me outside Euston Station, and you said——"

And at this moment there came over his features a kind of frightful transfiguration of living astonishment, as if he had been lit up like a lamp from the inside. "Why, I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I beg your pardon. I beg your pardon. You took me from Leicester Square. I remember now. I beg your pardon." And with that this astonishing man let out his whip with a sharp crack at his horse and went trundling away. The whole of which interview, before the banner of St. George I swear, is strictly true.

I looked at the strange cabman as he lessened in the distance and the mists. I do not know whether I was right in fancying that although his face had seemed so honest there was something unearthly and demoniac about him when seen

THE EXTRAORDINARY CABMAN

from behind. Perhaps he had been sent to tempt me from my adherence to those sanities and certainties which I had defended earlier in the day. In any case, it gave me pleasure to remember that my sense of reality, though it had rocked for an instant, had remained erect.

AN ACCIDENT

I AM now in a position to contribute my experience of a still more extraordinary cab. The extraordinary thing about the cab was that it did not like me; it threw me out violently in the middle of the Strand. If my friends who read the *Daily News* are as romantic (and as rich) as I take them to be, I presume that this experience is not uncommon. I suppose that they are all being thrown out of cabs all over London. Still, as there are some people, virginal and remote from the world, who have not yet had this luxurious experience, I will give a short account of the psychology of myself when my hansom cab ran into the side of a motor omnibus, and I hope hurt it.

I do not need to dwell on the essential romance of the hansom cab—that one really noble modern thing which our age, when it is judged, will gravely put beside the Parthenon. It is really modern in that it is both secret and swift. My particular hansom cab was modern in these two respects; it was also very modern in the fact that it came to grief. But it is also English; it is not to be found abroad; it belongs to a beautiful, romantic country where nearly everybody is pretending to be richer than he is, and acting as if he were. It is comfortable, and yet it is reckless; and that combination is the very soul of England. But although I had always realized all these good qualities in a hansom cab, I had not experienced all the possibilities, or, as the

AN ACCIDENT

moderns put it, all the aspects of that vehicle. My enunciation of the merits of a hansom cab had been always made when it was the right way up. Let me, therefore, explain how I felt when I fell out of a hansom cab for the first and, I am happy to believe, the last time. Polycrates threw one ring into the sea to propitiate the Fates. I have thrown one hansom cab into the sea (if you will excuse a rather violent metaphor) and the Fates are, I am quite sure, propitiated. Though I am told they do not like to be told so.

I was driving yesterday afternoon in a hansom cab down one of the sloping streets into the Strand, reading one of my own admirable articles with continual pleasure, and still more continual surprise, when the horse fell forward, scrambled a moment on the scraping stones, staggered to his feet again, and went forward. The horses in my cabs often do this, and I have learnt to enjoy my own articles at any angle of the vehicle. So I did not see anything at all odd about the way the horse went on again. But I saw it suddenly in the faces of all the people on the pavement. They were all turned towards me, and they were all struck with fear suddenly, as with a white flame out of the sky. And one man half ran out into the road with a movement of the elbow as if warding off a blow, and tried to stop the horse. Then I knew that the reins were lost, and the next moment the horse was like a living thunder-bolt. I try to describe things exactly as they seemed to me; many details I may have missed or misstated; many details may have, so to speak, gone mad in the race down the road. I remember that I once called one of my experiences "A Fragment of Fact." This is, at any rate, a

fragment of fact. No fact could possibly be more fragmentary than the sort of fact that I expected to be at the bottom of that street.

I believe in preaching to the converted; for I have generally found that the converted do not understand their own religion. Thus I have always urged everywhere that democracy has a deeper meaning than democrats understand; that is, that common and popular things, proverbs, and ordinary sayings always have something in them unrealized by most who repeat them. Here is one. We have all heard about the man who is in momentary danger, and who sees the whole of his life pass before him in a moment. In the cold, literal, and common sense of words, this is obviously a thundering lie. Nobody can pretend that in an accident or a mortal crisis he elaborately remembered all the tickets he had ever taken to Wimbledon, or all the times that he had ever passed the brown bread and butter.

But in those few moments, while my cab was tearing towards the traffic of the Strand, I discovered that there is a truth behind this phrase, as there is behind all popular phrases. I did really have, in that short and shrieking period, a rapid succession of a number of fundamental points of view. I had, so to speak, about five religions in almost as many seconds. My first religion was pure Paganism, which among sincere men is more shortly described as extreme fear. Then there succeeded a state of mind which is quite real, but for which no proper name has ever been found. The ancients called it Stoicism, and I think it must be what some German lunatics mean (if they mean

AN ACCIDENT

anything) when they talk about Pessimism. It was an empty and open acceptance of the thing that happens—as if one had got beyond the value of it. And then, curiously enough, came a very strong contrary feeling—that things mattered very much indeed, and yet that they were something more than tragic. It was a feeling, not that life was unimportant, but that life was much too important ever to be anything but life. I hope that this was Christianity. At any rate, it occurred at the moment when we went crash into the omnibus.

It seemed to me that the hansom cab simply turned over on top of me, like an enormous hood or hat. I then found myself crawling out from underneath it in attitudes so undignified that they must have added enormously to that great cause to which the Anti-Puritan League and I have recently dedicated ourselves. I mean the cause of the pleasures of the people. As to my demeanour when I emerged, I have two confessions to make, and they are both made merely in the interests of mental science. The first is that whereas I had been in a quite pious frame of mind the moment before the collision, when I got to my feet and found I had got off with a cut or two I began (like St. Peter) to curse and to swear. A man offered me a newspaper or something that I had dropped. I can distinctly remember consigning the paper to a state of irremediable spiritual ruin. I am very sorry for this now, and I apologize both to the man and to the paper. I have not the least idea what was the meaning of this half-witted anger; I mention it as a psychological confession. It was immediately followed by extreme hilarity, and I made so many silly jokes to the

policeman that he disgraced himself by continual laughter before all the little boys in the street, who had hitherto taken him seriously.

There is one other odd thing about the matter which I also mention as a curiosity of the human brain or deficiency of brain. At intervals of about every three minutes I kept on reminding the policeman that I had not paid the cabman, and that I hoped he would not lose his money. He said it would be all right, and the man would appear. But it was not until about half an hour afterwards that it suddenly struck me with a shock intolerable that the man might conceivably have lost more than half a crown; that he had been in danger as well as I. I had instinctively regarded the cabman as something uplifted above accidents, a god. I immediately made inquiries, and I am happy to say that they seemed to have been unnecessary.

But henceforward I shall always understand with a darker and more delicate charity those who take tythe of mint, and anise, and cumin, and neglect the weightier matters of the law; I shall remember how I was once really tortured with owing half a crown to a man who might have been dead. Some admirable men in white coats at the Charing Cross Hospital tied up my small injury, and I went out again into the Strand. I felt upon me even a kind of unnatural youth; I hungered for something untried. So to open a new chapter in my life I got into a hansom cab.

THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING ONE LEG

A FRIEND of mine who was visiting a poor woman in bereavement and casting about for some phrase of consolation that should not be either insolent or weak, said at last, "I think one can live through these great sorrows and even be the better. What wears one is the little worries." "That's quite right, mum," answered the old woman with emphasis, "and I ought to know, seeing I've had ten of 'em." It is, perhaps, in this sense that it is most true that little worries are most wearing. In its vaguer significance the phrase, though it contains a truth, contains also some possibilities of self-deception and error. People who have both small troubles and big ones have the right to say that they find the small ones the most bitter; and it is undoubtedly true that the back which is bowed under loads incredible can feel a faint addition to those loads; a giant holding up the earth and all its animal creation might still find the grasshopper a burden. But I am afraid that the maxim that the smallest worries are the worst is sometimes used or abused by people, because they have nothing but the very smallest worries. The lady may excuse herself for reviling the crumpled rose-leaf by reflecting with what extraordinary dignity she would wear the crown of thorns—if she had to. The gentleman may permit himself to curse the dinner and tell himself that he would behave much better if it were a mere matter of starvation. We need not

deny that the grasshopper on man's shoulder is a burden; but we need not pay much respect to a gentleman who is always calling out that he would rather have an elephant when he knows there are no elephants in the country. We may concede that a straw may break the camel's back, but we like to know that it really is the last straw and not the first.

I grant that those who have serious wrongs have a real right to grumble, so long as they grumble about something else. It is a singular fact that if they are sane they almost always do grumble about something else. To talk quite reasonably about your own quite real wrongs is the quickest way to go off your head. But people with great troubles talk about little ones, and the man who complains of the crumpled rose-leaf very often has his flesh full of the thorns. But if a man has commonly a very clear and happy daily life then I think we are justified in asking that he shall not make mountains out of molehills. I do not deny that molehills can sometimes be important. Small annoyances have this evil about them, that they can be more abrupt because they are more invisible; they cast no shadow before, they have no atmosphere. No one ever had a mystical premonition that he was going to tumble over a hassock. William III. died by falling over a molehill; I do not suppose that with all his varied abilities he could have managed to fall over a mountain. But when all this is allowed for, I repeat that we may ask a happy man (not William III.) to put up with pure inconveniences, and even make them part of his happiness. Of positive pain or positive poverty I do not here

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING ONE LEG

speak. I speak of those innumerable accidental limitations that are always falling across our path—bad weather, confinement to this or that house or room, failure of appointments or arrangements, waiting at railway stations, missing posts, finding unpunctuality when we want punctuality, or, what is worse, finding punctuality when we don't. It is of the poetic pleasures to be drawn from all these that I sing—I sing with confidence because I have recently been experimenting in the poetic pleasures which arise from having to sit in one chair with a sprained foot, with the only alternative course of standing on one leg like a stork. A stork is a poetic simile; therefore I eagerly adopted it.

To appreciate anything we must always isolate it, even if the thing itself symbolize something other than isolation. If we wish to see what a house is it must be a house in some uninhabited landscape. If we wish to depict what a man really is we must depict a man alone in a desert or on a dark sea sand. So long as he is a single figure he means all that humanity means; so long as he is solitary he means human society; so long as he is solitary he means sociability and comradeship. Add another figure and the picture is less human—not more so. One is company, two is none. If you wish to symbolize human building draw one dark tower on the horizon; if you wish to symbolize light let there be no star in the sky. Indeed, all through that strangely lit season which we call our day there is but one star in the sky—a large, fierce star which we call the sun. One sun is splendid; six suns would be only vulgar. One Tower of Giotto is sublime; a row of Towers of Giotto would be

only like a row of white posts. The poetry of art is in beholding the single tower; the poetry of nature in seeing the single tree; the poetry of love in following the single woman; the poetry of religion in worshipping the single star. And so, in the same pensive lucidity, I find the poetry of all human anatomy in standing on a single leg. To express complete and perfect leggishness the leg must stand in sublime isolation, like the tower in the wilderness. As Ibsen so finely says, the strongest leg is that which stands most alone.

This lonely leg on which I rest has all the simplicity of some Doric column. The students of architecture tell us that the only legitimate use of a column is to support weight. This column of mine fulfils its legitimate function. It supports weight. Being of an animal and organic consistency, it may even improve by the process, and during these few days that I am thus unequally balanced the helplessness or dislocation of the one leg may find compensation in the astonishing strength and classic beauty of the other leg. Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson in Mr. George Meredith's novel might pass by at any moment, and seeing me in the stork-like attitude would exclaim, with equal admiration and a more literal exactitude, "He has a leg." Notice how this famous literary phrase supports my contention touching this isolation of any admirable thing. Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson, wishing to make a clear and perfect picture of human grace, said that Sir Willoughby Patterne had a leg. She delicately glossed over and concealed the clumsy and offensive fact that he had really two legs. Two legs were superfluous and irrelevant, a reflection, and a confusion. Two legs would

ADVANTAGES OF HAVING ONE LEG

have confused Mrs. Mountstuart Jenkinson like two Monuments in London. That having had one good leg he should have another—this would be to use vain repetitions as the Gentiles do. She would have been as much bewildered by him as if he had been a centipede.

All pessimism has a secret optimism for its object. All surrender of life, all denial of pleasure, all darkness, all austerity, all desolation has for its real aim this separation of something so that it may be poignantly and perfectly enjoyed. I feel grateful for the slight sprain which has introduced this mysterious and fascinating division between one of my feet and the other. The way to love anything is to realize that it might be lost. In one of my feet I can feel how strong and splendid a foot is; in the other I can realize how very much otherwise it might have been. The moral of the thing is wholly exhilarating. This world and all our powers in it are far more awful and beautiful than we ever know until some accident reminds us. If you wish to perceive that limitless felicity, limit yourself if only for a moment. If you wish to realize how fearfully and wonderfully God's image is made, stand on one leg. If you want to realize the splendid vision of all visible things—wink the other eye.

ON LYING IN BED

LYING in bed would be an altogether perfect and supreme experience if only one had a coloured pencil long enough to draw on the ceiling. This, however, is not generally a part of the domestic apparatus on the premises. I think myself that the thing might be managed with several pails of Aspinall and a broom. Only if one worked in a really sweeping and masterly way, and laid on the colour in great washes, it might drip down again on one's face in floods of rich and mingled colour like some strange fairy rain; and that would have its disadvantages. I am afraid it would be necessary to stick to black and white in this form of artistic composition. To that purpose, indeed, the white ceiling would be of the greatest possible use; in fact, it is the only use I think of a white ceiling being put to.

But for the beautiful experiment of lying in bed I might never have discovered it. For years I have been looking for some blank spaces in a modern house to draw on. Paper is much too small for any really allegorical design; as Cyrano de Bergerac says: "*Il me faut des géants.*" But when I tried to find these fine clear spaces in the modern rooms such as we all live in I was continually disappointed. I found an endless pattern and complication of small objects hung like a curtain of fine links between me and my desire. I examined the walls; I found them to my surprise to be already covered with wall-paper, and I found



newton whittaker

. . . if only one had a coloured pencil long enough to
draw on the ceiling.

ON LYING IN BED

the wall-paper to be already covered with very uninteresting images, all bearing a ridiculous resemblance to each other. I could not understand why one arbitrary symbol (a symbol apparently entirely devoid of any religious or philosophical significance) should thus be sprinkled all over my nice walls like a sort of small-pox. The Bible must be referring to wall-papers, I think, when it says, "Use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do." I found the Turkey carpet a mass of unmeaning colours, rather like the Turkish Empire, or like the sweetmeat called Turkish Delight. I do not exactly know what Turkish Delight really is; but I suppose it is Macedonian Massacres. Everywhere that I went forlornly, with my pencil or my paint brush, I found that others had unaccountably been before me, spoiling the walls, the curtains, and the furniture with their childish and barbaric designs.

Nowhere did I find a really clear space for sketching until this occasion when I prolonged beyond the proper limit the process of lying on my back in bed. Then the light of that white heaven broke upon my vision, that breadth of mere white which is indeed almost the definition of Paradise, since it means purity and also means freedom. But alas! like all heavens now that it is seen it is found to be unattainable; it looks more austere and more distant than the blue sky outside the window. For my proposal to paint on it with the bristly end of a broom has been discouraged—never mind by whom; by a person debarred from all political rights—and even my minor proposal to put the other end of the broom into the kitchen fire and turn it into charcoal has not been conceded. Yet I am certain

that it was from persons in my position that all the original inspiration came for covering the ceilings of palaces and cathedrals with a riot of fallen angels or victorious gods. I am sure that it was only because Michael Angelo was engaged in the ancient and honourable occupation of lying in bed that he ever realized how the roof of the Sistine Chapel might be made into an awful imitation of a divine drama that could only be acted in the heavens.

The tone now commonly taken towards the practice of lying in bed is hypocritical and unhealthy. Of all the marks of modernity that seem to mean a kind of decadence, there is none more menacing and dangerous than the exaltation of very small and secondary matters of conduct at the expense of very great and primary ones, at the expense of eternal ties and tragic human morality. If there is one thing worse than the modern weakening of major morals it is the modern strengthening of minor morals. Thus it is considered more withering to accuse a man of bad taste than of bad ethics. Cleanliness is not next to godliness nowadays, for cleanliness is made an essential and godliness is regarded as an offence. A playwright can attack the institution of marriage so long as he does not misrepresent the manners of society, and I have met Ibsenite pessimists who thought it wrong to take beer but right to take prussic acid. Especially this is so in matters of hygiene; notably such matters as lying in bed. Instead of being regarded, as it ought to be, as a matter of personal convenience and adjustment, it has come to be regarded by many as if it were a part of essential morals to get up early in the morning. It is, upon

ON LYING IN BED

the whole, part of practical wisdom; but there is nothing good about it or bad about its opposite.

Misers get up early in the morning; and burglars, I am informed, get up the night before. It is the great peril of our society that all its mechanism may grow more fixed while its spirit grows more fickle. A man's minor actions and arrangements ought to be free, flexible, creative; the things that should be unchangeable are his principles, his ideals. But with us the reverse is true; our views change constantly; but our lunch does not change. Now, I should like men to have strong and rooted conceptions, but as for their lunch, let them have it sometimes in the garden, sometimes in bed, sometimes on the roof, sometimes in the top of a tree. Let them argue from the same first principles, but let them do it in a bed, or a boat, or a balloon. This alarming growth of good habits really means a too great emphasis on those virtues which mere custom can ensure; it means too little emphasis on those virtues which custom can never quite ensure, sudden and splendid virtues of inspired pity or of inspired candour. If ever that abrupt appeal is made to us we may fail. A man can get used to getting up at five o'clock in the morning. A man cannot very well get used to being burnt for his opinions; the first experiment is commonly fatal. Let us pay a little more attention to these possibilities of the heroic and the unexpected. I dare say that when I get out of this bed I shall do some deed of an almost terrible virtue.

For those who study the great art of lying in bed there is one emphatic caution to be added. Even for those who can do their work in bed (like

journalists), still more for those whose work cannot be done in bed (as, for example, the professional harpooners of whales), it is obvious that the indulgence must be very occasional. But that is not the caution I mean. The caution is this: if you do lie in bed, be sure you do it without any reason or justification at all. I do not speak, of course, of the seriously sick. But if a healthy man lies in bed, let him do it without a rag of excuse; then he will get up a healthy man. If he does it for some secondary hygienic reason, if he has some scientific explanation, he may get up a hypochondriac.

THE TWELVE MEN

THE other day, while I was meditating on morality and Mr. H. Pitt, I was, so to speak, snatched up and put into a jury box to try people. The snatching took some weeks, but to me it seemed something sudden and arbitrary. I was put into this box because I lived in Battersea, and my name began with a C. Looking round me, I saw that there were also summoned and in attendance in the court whole crowds and processions of men, all of whom lived in Battersea, and all of whose names began with a C.

It seems that they always summon jurymen in this sweeping alphabetical way. At one official blow, so to speak, Battersea is denuded of all its C's, and left to get on as best it can with the rest of the alphabet. A Cumberpatch is missing from one street—a Chizzolpop from another—three Chucksterfields from Chucksterfield House; the children are crying out for an absent Cadgerboy; the woman at the street corner is weeping for her Coffintop, and will not be comforted. We settle down with a rollicking ease into our seats (for we are a bold, devil-may-care race, the C's of Battersea), and an oath is administered to us in a totally inaudible manner by an individual resembling an Army surgeon in his second childhood. We understand, however, that we are to well and truly try the case between our sovereign lord the King and the prisoner at the bar, neither of whom has put in an appearance as yet.

Just when I was wondering whether the King and the prisoner were, perhaps, coming to an amicable understanding in some adjoining public-house, the prisoner's head appears above the barrier of the dock; he is accused of stealing bicycles, and he is the living image of a great friend of mine. We go into the matter of the stealing of the bicycles. We do well and truly try the case between the King and the prisoner in the affair of the bicycles. And we come to the conclusion, after a brief but reasonable discussion, that the King is not in any way implicated. Then we pass on to a woman who neglected her children, and who looks as if somebody or something had neglected her. And I am one of those who fancy that something had.

All the time that the eye took in these light appearances and the brain passed these light criticisms, there was in the heart a barbaric pity and fear which men have never been able to utter from the beginning, but which is the power behind half the poems of the world. The mood cannot even inadequately be suggested, except faintly by this statement that tragedy is the highest expression of the infinite value of human life. Never had I stood so close to pain; and never so far away from pessimism. Ordinarily, I should not have spoken of these dark emotions at all, for speech about them is too difficult; but I mention them now for a specific and particular reason to the statement of which I will proceed at once. I speak of these feelings because out of the furnace of them there came a curious realization of a political or social truth. I saw with a queer and indescribable kind of clearness what a jury really is, and why we must never let it go.

THE TWELVE MEN

The trend of our epoch up to this time has been consistently towards specialism and professionalism. We tend to have trained soldiers because they fight better, trained singers because they sing better, trained dancers because they dance better, specially instructed laughers because they laugh better, and so on and so on. The principle has been applied to law and politics by innumerable modern writers. Many Fabians have insisted that a greater part of our political work should be performed by experts. Many legalists have declared that the untrained jury should be altogether supplanted by the trained judge.

Now, if this world of ours were really what is called reasonable, I do not know that there would be any fault to find with this. But the true result of all experience and the true foundation of all religion is this. That the four or five things that it is most practically essential that a man should know, are all of them what people call paradoxes. That is to say, that though we all find them in life to be mere plain truths, yet we cannot easily state them in words without being guilty of seeming verbal contradictions. One of them, for instance, is the unimpeachable platitude that the man who finds most pleasure for himself is often the man who least hunts for it. Another is the paradox of courage; the fact that the way to avoid death is not to have too much aversion to it. Whoever is careless enough of his bones to climb some hopeless cliff above the tide may save his bones by that carelessness. Whoever will lose his life, the same shall save it; an entirely practical and prosaic statement.

Now, one of these four or five paradoxes which

should be taught to every infant prattling at his mother's knee is the following: That the more a man looks at a thing, the less he can see it, and the more a man learns a thing the less he knows it. The Fabian argument of the expert, that the man who is trained should be the man who is trusted, would be absolutely unanswerable if it were really true that a man who studied a thing and practised it every day went on seeing more and more of its significance. But he does not. He goes on seeing less and less of its significance. In the same way, alas! we all go on every day, unless we are continually goading ourselves into gratitude and humility, seeing less and less of the significance of the sky or the stones.

Now, it is a terrible business to mark a man out for the vengeance of men. But it is a thing to which a man can grow accustomed, as he can to other terrible things; he can even grow accustomed to the sun. And the horrible thing about all legal officials, even the best, about all judges, magistrates, barristers, detectives, and policemen, is not that they are wicked (some of them are good), not that they are stupid (several of them are quite intelligent), it is simply that they have got used to it.

Strictly they do not see the prisoner in the dock; all they see is the usual man in the usual place. They do not see the awful court of judgment; they only see their own workshop. Therefore, the instinct of Christian civilization has most wisely declared that into their judgments there shall upon every occasion be infused fresh blood and fresh thoughts from the streets. Men shall come in who can see the court and the crowd, and

THE TWELVE MEN

coarse faces of the policemen and the professional criminals, the wasted faces of the wastrels, the unreal faces of the gesticulating counsel, and see it all as one sees a new picture or a play hitherto unvisited.

Our civilization has decided, and very justly decided, that determining the guilt or innocence of men is a thing too important to be trusted to trained men. It wishes for light upon that awful matter, it asks men who know no more law than I know, but who can feel the things that I felt in the jury box. When it wants a library catalogued, or the solar system discovered, or any trifle of that kind, it uses up its specialists. But when it wishes anything done which is really serious, it collects twelve of the ordinary men standing round. The same thing was done, if I remember right, by the Founder of Christianity.

THE WIND AND THE TREES

I AM sitting under tall trees, with a great wind boiling like surf about the tops of them, so that their living load of leaves rocks and roars in something that is at once exultation and agony. I feel, in fact, as if I were actually sitting at the bottom of the sea among mere anchors and ropes, while over my head and over the green twilight of water sounded the everlasting rush of waves and the toil and crash of shipwreck of tremendous ships. The wind tugs at the trees as if it might pluck them root and all out of the earth like tufts of grass. Or, to try yet another desperate figure of speech for this unspeakable energy, the trees are straining and tearing and lashing as if they were a tribe of dragons each tied by the tail.

As I look at these top-heavy giants tortured by an invisible and violent witchcraft, a phrase comes back into my mind. I remember a little boy of my acquaintance who was once walking in Battersea Park under just such torn skies and tossing trees. He did not like the wind at all; it blew in his face too much; it made him shut his eyes; and it blew off his hat, of which he was very proud. He was, as far as I remember, about four. After complaining repeatedly of the atmospheric unrest, he said at last to his mother, "Well, why don't you take away the trees, and then it wouldn't wind."

Nothing could be more intelligent or natural than this mistake. Any one looking for the first time at the trees might fancy that they were indeed

THE WIND AND THE TREES

vast and titanic fans, which by their mere waving agitated the air around them for miles. Nothing, I say, could be more human and excusable than the belief that it is the trees which make the wind. Indeed, the belief is so human and excusable, that it is, as a matter of fact, the belief of about ninety-nine out of a hundred of the philosophers, reformers, sociologists, and politicians of the great age in which we live. My small friend was, in fact, very like the principal modern thinkers; only much nicer.

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In the little apologue or parable which he has thus the honour of inventing, the trees stand for all visible things and the wind for the invisible. The wind is the spirit which bloweth where it listeth; the trees are the material things of the world which are blown where the spirit lists. The wind is philosophy, religion, revolution; the trees are cities and civilizations. We only know that there is a wind because the trees on some distant hill suddenly go mad. We only know that there is a real revolution because all the chimney-pots go mad on the whole sky-line of the city.

Just as the ragged outline of a tree grows suddenly more ragged and rises into fantastic crests or tattered tails, so the human city rises under the wind of the spirit into toppling temples or sudden spires. No man has ever seen a revolution. Mobs pouring through the palaces, blood pouring down the gutters, the guillotine lifted higher than the throne, a prison in ruins, a people in arms—these things are not revolution, but the results of revolution.

You cannot see a wind; you can only see that

there is a wind. So, also, you cannot see a revolution; you can only see that there is a revolution. And there never has been in the history of the world a real revolution, brutally active and decisive, which was not preceded by unrest and new dogma in the region of invisible things. All revolutions began by being abstract. Most revolutions began by being quite pedantically abstract.

The wind is up above the world before a twig on the tree has moved. So there must always be a battle in the sky before there is a battle on the earth. Since it is lawful to pray for the coming of the kingdom, it is lawful also to pray for the coming of the revolution that shall restore the kingdom. It is lawful to hope to hear the wind of heaven in the trees. It is lawful to pray, "Thine anger come on earth as it is in heaven."

The great human dogma, then, is that the wind moves the trees. The great human heresy is that the trees move the wind. When people begin to say that the material circumstances have alone created the moral circumstances, then they have prevented all possibility of serious change. For if my circumstances have made me wholly stupid, how can I be certain even that I am right in altering those circumstances?

The man who represents all thought as an accident of environment is simply smashing and discrediting all his own thoughts—including that one. To treat the human mind as having an ultimate authority is necessary to any kind of thinking, even free thinking. And nothing will ever be reformed in this age or country unless we realize that the moral fact comes first.

THE WIND AND THE TREES

For example, most of us, I suppose, have seen in print and heard in debating clubs an endless discussion that goes on between Socialists and total abstainers. The latter say that drink leads to poverty; the former say that poverty leads to drink. I can only wonder at either of them being content with such simple physical explanations. Surely it is obvious that the thing which among the English proletariat leads to poverty is the same as the thing which leads to drink; the absence of strong civic dignity, the absence of an instinct that resists degradation.

When you have discovered why the enormous English estates were not long ago cut up into small holdings like the land of France, you will have discovered why the Englishman is more drunken than the Frenchman. The Englishman, among his million delightful virtues, really has this quality, which may strictly be called "hand to mouth," because under its influence a man's hand automatically seeks his own mouth, instead of seeking (as it sometimes should do) his oppressor's nose. And a man who says that the English inequality in land is due only to economic causes, or that the drunkenness of England is due only to economic causes, is saying something so absurd that he cannot really have thought what he was saying.

Yet things quite as preposterous as this are said and written under the influence of that great spectacle of babyish helplessness, the economic theory of history. We have people who represent that all great historic motives were economic, and then have to howl at the top of their voices in order to induce the modern democracy to act on economic motives. The extreme Marxian poli-

CHESTERTON'S ESSAYS

ticians in England exhibit themselves as a small, heroic minority, trying vainly to induce the world to do what, according to their theory, the world always does. The truth is, of course, that there will be a social revolution the moment the thing has ceased to be purely economic. You can never have a revolution in order to establish a democracy. You must have a democracy in order to have a revolution.

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I get up from under the trees, for the wind and the slight rain have ceased. The trees stand up like golden pillars in a clear sunlight. The tossing of the trees and the blowing of the wind have ceased simultaneously. So I suppose there are still modern philosophers who will maintain that the trees make the wind.

A CAB RIDE ACROSS COUNTRY

SOWN somewhere far off in the shallow dales of Hertfordshire there lies a village of great beauty, and I doubt not of admirable virtue, but of eccentric and unbalanced literary taste, which asked the present writer to come down to it on Sunday afternoon and give an address. Now it was very difficult to get down to it at all on Sunday afternoon, owing to the indescribable state into which our national laws and customs have fallen in connection with the seventh day. It is not Puritanism; it is simply anarchy. I should have some sympathy with the Jewish Sabbath, if it were a Jewish Sabbath, and that for three reasons. First, that religion is an intrinsically sympathetic thing; second, that I cannot conceive any religion worth calling a religion without fixed and material observances; and third, that the particular observance of sitting still and doing no work is one that suits my temperament down to the ground.

But the absurdity of the modern English convention is that it does not let a man sit still; it only perpetually trips him up when it has forced him to walk about. Our Sabbatarianism does not forbid us to ask a man in Battersea to come and talk in Hertfordshire; it only prevents his getting there. I can understand that a deity might be worshipped with joys, with flowers and fireworks in the old European style. I can understand that a deity might be worshipped with sorrows. But I cannot imagine any deity being worshipped with inconveniences.

Let the good Moslem go to Mecca, or let him abide in his tent, according to his feeling for religious symbols. But surely Allah cannot see anything particularly dignified in his servant being misled by the time-table, finding that the old Mecca express is not running, missing his connection at Baghdad, or having to wait three hours in a small side station outside Damascus.

So it was with me on this occasion. I found there was no telegraph service at all to this place; I found there was only one weak thread of train-service. Now if this had been the authority of real English religion, I should have submitted to it at once. If I believed that the telegraph clerk could not send the telegram because he was at that moment rigid in an ecstasy of prayer, I should think all telegrams unimportant in comparison. If I could believe that railway porters when relieved from their duties rushed with passion to the nearest place of worship, I should say that all lectures and everything else ought to give way to such a consideration. I should not complain if the national faith forbade me to make any appointments of labour or self-expression on the Sabbath. But, as it is, it only tells me that I may very probably keep the Sabbath by not keeping the appointment.

But I must resume the sad details of my tale. I found that there was only one train in the whole of that Sunday by which I could even get within several hours or several miles of the time or place. I therefore went to the telephone, which is one of my favourite toys, and down which I have shouted many valuable, but prematurely arrested, monologues upon art and morals. I remember a mild

A CAB RIDE ACROSS COUNTRY

shock of surprise when I discovered that one could use the telephone on Sunday; I did not expect it to be cut off, but I expected it to buzz more than on ordinary days, to the advancement of our national religion. Through this instrument, in fewer words than usual, and with a comparative economy of epigram, I ordered a taxi-cab to take me to the railway station. I have not a word to say in general either against telephones or taxi-cabs; they seem to me two of the purest and most poetic of the creations of modern scientific civilization. Unfortunately, when the taxi-cab started, it did exactly what modern scientific civilization has done—it broke down. The result of this was that when I arrived at King's Cross my only train was gone; there was a Sabbath calm in the station, a calm in the eyes of the porters, and in my breast, if calm at all, if any calm, a calm despair.

There was not, however, very much calm of any sort in my breast on first making the discovery; and it was turned to blinding horror when I learnt that I could not even send a telegram to the organizers of the meeting. To leave my entertainers in the lurch was sufficiently exasperating; to leave them without any intimation was simply low. I reasoned with the official. I said: "Do you really mean to say that if my brother were dying and my mother in this place, I could not communicate with her?" He was a man of literal and laborious mind; he asked me if my brother was dying. I answered that he was in excellent and even offensive health, but that I was inquiring upon a question of principle. What would happen if England were invaded, or if I alone knew how to turn aside a comet or an earthquake? He waved away these hypotheses in the

most irresponsible spirit, but he was quite certain that telegrams could not reach this particular village. Then something exploded in me; that element of the outrageous which is the mother of all adventures sprang up ungovernable, and I decided that I would not be a cad merely because some of my remote ancestors had been Calvinists. I would keep my appointment if I lost all my money and all my wits. I went out into the quiet London street, where my quiet London cab was still waiting for its fare in the cold and misty morning. I placed myself comfortably in the London cab and told the London driver to drive me to the other end of Hertfordshire. And he did.

I shall not forget that drive. It was doubtful whether, even in a motor-cab, the thing was possible with any consideration for the driver, not to speak of some slight consideration for the people in the road. I urged the driver to eat and drink something before he started, but he said (with I know not what pride of profession or delicate sense of adventure) that he would rather do it when we arrived--if we ever did. I was by no means so refined; I bought a varied selection of pork-pies at a little shop that was open (why was that shop open?--it is all a mystery), and ate them as we went along. The beginning was sombre and irritating. I was annoyed, not with people, but with things, like a baby; with the motor for breaking down and with Sunday for being Sunday. And the sight of the northern slums expanded and ennobled, but did not decrease, my gloom: Whitechapel has an Oriental gaudiness in its squalor; Battersea and Camberwell have an indescribable bustle of democracy; but the

A CAB RIDE ACROSS COUNTRY

poor parts of North London . . . well, perhaps I saw them wrongly under that ashen morning and on that foolish errand.

It was one of those days which more than once this year broke the retreat of winter; a winter day that began too late to be spring. We were already clear of the obstructing crowds, and quickening our pace through a borderland of market gardens and isolated public-houses, when the grey showed golden patches and a good light began to glitter on everything. The cab went quicker and quicker. The open land whirled wider and wider; but I did not lose that sense of being battled with and thwarted that I had felt in the thronged slums. Rather the feeling increased, because of the great difficulty of space and time. The faster went the car, the fiercer and thicker I felt the fight.

The whole landscape seemed charging at me—and just missing me. The tall, shining grass went by like showers of arrows; the very trees seemed like lances hurled at my heart, and shaving it by a hair's breadth. Across some vast, smooth valley I saw a beech-tree by the white road stand up little and defiant. It grew bigger and bigger with blinding rapidity. It charged me like a tilting knight, seemed to hack at my head, and pass by. Sometimes, when we went round a curve of road, the effect was yet more awful. It seemed as if some tree or wind-mill swung round to smite like a boomerang. The sun by this time was a blazing fact; and I saw that all Nature is chivalrous and militant. We do wrong to seek peace in Nature; we should rather seek the nobler sport of war; and see all the trees as green banners.

I made my speech, arriving just when everybody was deciding to leave. When my cab came reeling into the market-place they decided, with evident disappointment, to remain. Over the lecture I draw a veil. When I came back home I was called to the telephone, and a meek voice expressed regret for the failure of the motor-cab, and even said something about any reasonable payment. "Payment!" I cried down the telephone. "Whom can I pay for my own superb experience? What is the usual charge for seeing the clouds shattered by the sun? What is the market price of a tree blue on the sky-line and then blinding white in the sun? Mention your price for that windmill that stood behind the hollyhocks in the garden. Let me pay you for . . ."

Here it was, I think, that we were cut off.

THE LITTLE BIRDS WHO WON'T SING

ON my last morning on the Flemish coast, when I knew that in a few hours I should be in England, my eye fell upon one of the details of Gothic carving of which Flanders is full. I do not know whether the thing was old, though it was certainly knocked about and indecipherable, but at least it was certainly in the style and tradition of the early Middle Ages. It seemed to represent men bending themselves (not to say twisting themselves) to certain primary employments. Some seemed to be sailors tugging at ropes; others, I think, were reaping; others were energetically pouring something into something else. This is entirely characteristic of the pictures and carvings of the early thirteenth century, perhaps the most purely vigorous time in all history. The great Greeks preferred to carve their gods and heroes doing nothing. Splendid and philosophic as their composure is, there is always about it something that marks the master of many slaves. But if there was one thing the early mediævals liked, it was representing people doing something—hunting or hawking, or rowing boats, or treading grapes, or making shoes, or cooking something in a pot. "*Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas.*" (I quote from memory.) The Middle Ages is full of that spirit in all its monuments and manuscripts. Chaucer retains it in his jolly insistence on everybody's type of trade and toil. It was the earliest and youngest

resurrection of Europe, the time when social order was strengthening, but had not yet become oppressive; the time when religious faiths were strong, but had not yet been exasperated. For this reason the whole effect of Greek and Gothic carving is different. The figures in the Elgin marbles, though often rearing their steeds for an instant in the air, seem frozen for ever at that perfect instant. But a mass of mediæval carving seems actually a sort of bustle or hubbub in stone. Sometimes one cannot help feeling that the groups actually move and mix, and the whole front of a great cathedral has the hum of a huge hive.

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But about these particular figures there was a peculiarity of which I could not be sure. Those of them that had any heads had very curious heads, and it seemed to me that they had their mouths open. Whether or no this really meant anything or was an accident of nascent art I do not know; but in the course of wondering I recalled to my mind the fact that singing was connected with many of the tasks there suggested, that there were songs for reapers reaping and songs for sailors hauling ropes. I was still thinking about this small problem when I walked along the pier at Ostend; and I heard some sailors uttering a measured shout as they laboured, and I remembered that sailors still sing in chorus while they work, and even sing different songs according to what part of their work they are doing. And a little while afterwards, when my sea journey was over, the sight of men working in the English fields reminded me again that there are still songs for harvest and for many agricultural routines. And I suddenly wondered why, if

LITTLE BIRDS WHO WON'T SING

this were so, it should be quite unknown for any modern trade to have a ritual poetry. How did people come to chant rude poems while pulling certain ropes or gathering certain fruit, and why did nobody do anything of the kind while producing any of the modern things? Why is a modern newspaper never printed by people singing in chorus? Why do shopmen seldom, if ever, sing?

If reapers sing while reaping, why should not auditors sing while auditing and bankers while banking. If there are songs for all the separate things that have to be done in a boat, why are there not songs for all the separate things that have to be done in a bank? As the train from Dover flew through the Kentish gardens, I tried to write a few songs suitable for commercial gentlemen. Thus, the work of bank clerks when casting up columns might begin with a thundering chorus in praise of Simple Addition.

“Up, my lads, and lift the ledgers, sleep and ease
are o’er.

Hear the Stars of Morning shouting: ‘Two
and Two are Four.’

Though the creeds and realms are reeling,
though the sophists roar,

Though we weep and pawn our watches,
‘Two and Two are Four.’”

And then, of course, we should need another song for times of financial crisis and courage, a song with a more fierce and panic-stricken metre, like the rushing of horses in the night:

CHESTERTON'S ESSAYS

"There's a run upon the Bank—

Stand away!

For the Manager's a crank and the Secretary
drank, and the Upper Tooting Bank

Turns to bay!

Stand close: there is a run

On the Bank.

Of our ship, our royal one, let the ringing
legend run, that she fired with every gun
Ere she sank."

And as I came into the cloud of London I met a friend of mine who actually is in a bank, and submitted these suggestions in rhyme to him for use among his colleagues. But he was not very hopeful about the matter. It was not (he assured me) that he underrated the verses, or in any sense lamented their lack of polish. No; it was rather, he felt, an indefinable something in the very atmosphere of the society in which we live that makes it spiritually difficult to sing in banks. And I think he must be right; though the matter is very mysterious. I may observe here that I think there must be some mistake in the calculations of the Socialists. They put down all our distress not to a moral tone, but to the chaos of private enterprise. Now, banks are private; but post offices are Socialistic: therefore I naturally expected that the post office would fall into the collectivist idea of a chorus. Judge of my surprise when the lady in my local post office (whom I urged to sing) dismissed the idea with far more coldness than the bank clerk had done. She seemed, indeed, to be in a considerably greater state of depression than he. Should any one suppose that this was the effect of the verses

LITTLE BIRDS WHO WON'T SING

themselves, it is only fair to say that the specimen verse of the Post Office Hymn ran thus:

“O'er London our letters are shaken like snow,
Our wires o'er the world like the thunder-
bolts go.

The news that may marry a maiden in Sark,
Or kill an old lady in Finsbury Park.”

Chorus (with a swing of joy and energy):
“Or kill an old lady in Finsbury Park.”

And the more I thought about the matter the more painfully certain it seemed that the most important and typical modern things could not be done with a chorus. One could not, for instance, be a great financier and sing; because the essence of being a great financier is that you keep quiet. You could not even in many modern circles be a public man and sing; because in those circles the essence of being a public man is that you do nearly everything in private. Nobody would imagine a chorus of money-lenders. Every one knows the story of the solicitors' corps of volunteers who, when the Colonel on the battlefield cried “Charge!” all said simultaneously, “Six-and-eightpence.” Men can sing while charging in a military, but hardly in a legal sense. And at the end of my reflections I had really got no further than the subconscious feeling of my friend the bank clerk—that there is something spiritually suffocating about our life; not about our laws merely, but about our life. Bank clerks are without songs not because they are poor, but because they are sad. Sailors are much poorer. As I passed homewards I passed a little tin

building of some religious sort, which was shaken with shouting as a trumpet is torn with its own tongue. *They* were singing anyhow; and I had for an instant a fancy I had often had before: that with us the super-human is the only place where you can find the human. Human nature is hunted, and has fled into sanctuary.

THE TRAVELLERS IN STATE

THE other day, to my great astonishment, I caught a train; it was a train going into the Eastern Counties, and I only just caught it. And while I was running along the train (amid general admiration) I noticed that there were a quite peculiar and unusual number of carriages marked "Engaged." On five, six, seven, eight, nine carriages was pasted the little notice: at five, six, seven, eight, nine windows were big bland men staring out in the conscious pride of possession. Their bodies seemed more than usually impenetrable, their faces more than usually placid. It could not be the Derby, if only for the minor reasons that it was the opposite direction and the wrong day. It could hardly be the King. It could hardly be the French President. For, though these distinguished persons like to be private for three hours, they are at least public for three minutes. A crowd can gather to see them step into the train; and there was no crowd here, nor any police ceremonial.

Who were those awful persons, who occupied more of the train than a bricklayer's beanfeast, and yet were more fastidious and delicate than the King's own suite? Who were these that were larger than a mob, yet more mysterious than a monarch? Was it possible that instead of our Royal House visiting the Tsar, he was really visiting us? Or does the House of Lords have a beanfeast? I waited and wondered until the train slowed down at some station in the direction of Cambridge. Then the

large, impenetrable men got out, and after them got out the distinguished holders of the engaged seats. They were all dressed decorously in one colour; they had neatly cropped hair; and they were chained together.

I looked across the carriage at its only other occupant, and our eyes met. He was a small, tired-looking man, and, as I afterwards learnt, a native of Cambridge; by the look of him, some working tradesman there, such as a journeyman tailor or a small clock-mender. In order to make conversation I said I wondered where the convicts were going. His mouth twitched with the instinctive irony of our poor, and he said: "I don't s'pose they're goin' on an 'oliday at the seaside with little spades and pails." I was naturally delighted, and, pursuing the same vein of literary invention, I suggested that perhaps dons were taken down to Cambridge chained together like this. And as he lived in Cambridge, and had seen several dons, he was pleased with such a scheme. Then when we had ceased to laugh, we suddenly became quite silent; and the bleak, grey eyes of the little man grew sadder and emptier than an open sea. I knew what he was thinking, because I was thinking the same, because all modern sophists are only sophists, and there is such a thing as mankind. Then at last (and it fell in as exactly as the right last note of a tune one is trying to remember) he said: "Well, I s'pose we 'ave to do it." And in those three things, his first speech and his silence and his second speech, there were all the three great fundamental facts of the English democracy—its profound sense of humour, its profound sense of pathos, and its profound sense of helplessness.

It cannot be too often repeated that all real democracy is an attempt (like that of a jolly hostess) to bring the shy people out. For every practical purpose of a political state, for every practical purpose of a tea-party, he that abaseth himself must be exalted. At a tea-party it is equally obvious that he that exalteth himself must be abased, if possible without bodily violence. Now people talk of democracy as being coarse and turbulent: it is a self-evident error in mere history. Aristocracy is the thing that is always coarse and turbulent: for it means appealing to the self-confident people. Democracy means appealing to the diffident people. Democracy means getting those people to vote who would never have the cheek to govern: and (according to Christian ethics) the precise people who ought to govern are the people who have not the cheek to do it. There is a strong example of this truth in my friend in the train. The only two types we hear of in this argument about crime and punishment are two very rare and abnormal types.

We hear of the stark sentimentalist, who talks as if there were no problem at all: as if physical kindness would cure everything: as if one need only pat Nero and stroke Ivan the Terrible. This mere belief in bodily humanitarianism is not sentimental; it is simply snobbish. For if comfort gives men virtue, the comfortable classes ought to be virtuous--which is absurd. Then, again, we do hear of the yet weaker and more watery type of sentimentalist: I mean the sentimentalist who says, with a sort of splutter, "Flog the brutes!" or who tells you with innocent obscenity "what he would do" with a certain man--always supposing the man's hands were tied.

This is the more effeminate type of the two; but both are weak and unbalanced. And it is only these two types, the sentimental humanitarian and the sentimental brutalitarian, whom one hears in the modern babel. Yet you very rarely meet either of them in a train. You never meet any one else in a controversy. The man you meet in a train is like this man that I met: he is emotionally decent, only he is intellectually doubtful. So far from luxuriating in the loathsome things that could be "done" to criminals, he feels bitterly how much better it would be if nothing need be done. But something must be done. "I s'pose we 'ave to do it." In short, he is simply a sane man, and of a sane man there is only one safe definition. He is a man who can have tragedy in his heart and comedy in his head.

Now the real difficulty of discussing decently this problem of the proper treatment of criminals is that both parties discuss the matter without any direct human feeling. The denouncers of wrong are as cold as the organizers of wrong. Humanitarianism is as hard as inhumanity.

Let me take one practical instance. I think the flogging arranged in our modern prisons is a filthy torture; all its scientific paraphernalia, the photographing, the medical attendance, prove that it goes to the last foul limit of the boot and rack. The cat is simply the rack without any of its intellectual reasons. Holding this view strongly, I open the ordinary humanitarian books or papers and I find a phrase like this, "The lash is a relic of barbarism." So is the plough. So is the fishing net. So is the horn or the staff or the fire lit in winter. What an inexpressibly feeble phrase for anything one wants

to attack—a relic of barbarism! It is as if a man walked naked down the street to-morrow, and we said that his clothes were not quite in the latest fashion. There is nothing particularly nasty about being a relic of barbarism. Dancing is a relic of barbarism. Man is a relic of barbarism. Civilization is a relic of barbarism.

But torture is not a relic of barbarism at all. In plain truth it is simply a relic of sin; but in comparative history it may well be called a relic of civilization. It has always been most artistic and elaborate when everything else was most artistic and elaborate. Thus it was detailed and exquisite in the late Roman Empire, in the complex and gorgeous sixteenth century, in the centralized French monarchy a hundred years before the Revolution, and in the great Chinese civilization to this day. This is, first and last, the frightful thing we must remember. In so far as we grow instructed and refined we are not (in any sense whatever) naturally moving away from torture. We may be moving towards torture. We must watch what we are doing, if we are to avoid the enormous secret cruelty which has crowned every historic civilization.

The train moves more swiftly through the sunny English fields. They have taken the prisoners away, and I do not know what they have done with them.

THE DIABOLIST

EVERY now and then I have introduced into my Essays an element of truth. Things that really happened have been mentioned, such as meeting President Kruger or being thrown out of a cab. What I have now to relate really happened; yet there was no element in it of practical politics or of personal danger. It was simply a quiet conversation which I had with another man. But that quiet conversation was by far the most terrible thing that has ever happened to me in my life. It happened so long ago that I cannot be certain of the exact words of the dialogue, only of its main questions and answers; but there is one sentence in it for which I can answer absolutely and word for word. It was a sentence so awful that I could not forget it if I would. It was the last sentence spoken; and it was not spoken to me.

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The thing befell me in the days when I was at an art school. An art school is different from almost all other schools or colleges in this respect: that, being of new and crude creation and of lax discipline, it presents a specially strong contrast between the industrious and the idle. People at an art school either do an atrocious amount of work or do no work at all. I belonged, along with other charming people, to the latter class; and this threw me often into the society of men who were very different from myself, and who were idle for reasons very different from mine. I was idle because

THE DIABOLIST

I was very much occupied; I was engaged about that time in discovering, to my own extreme and lasting astonishment, that I was not an atheist. But there were others also at loose ends who were engaged in discovering what Carlyle called (I think with needless delicacy) the fact that ginger is hot in the mouth.

I value that time, in short, because it made me acquainted with a good representative number of blackguards. In this connection there are two very curious things which the critic of human life may observe. The first is the fact that there is one real difference between men and women; that women prefer to talk in twos, while men prefer to talk in threes. The second is that when you find (as you often do) three young cads and idiots going about together and getting drunk together every day, you generally find that one of the three cads and idiots is (for some extraordinary reason) not a cad and not an idiot. In those small groups devoted to a drivelling dissipation there is almost always one man who seems to have condescended to his company; one man who, while he can talk a foul triviality with his fellows, can also talk politics with a Socialist, or philosophy with a Catholic.

It was just such a man whom I came to know well. It was strange, perhaps, that he liked his dirty, drunken society; it was stranger still, perhaps, that he liked my society. For hours of the day he would talk with me about Milton or Gothic architecture; for hours of the night he would go where I have no wish to follow him, even in speculation. He was a man with a long, ironical face, and close and red hair; he was by class a gentleman, and could walk like one, but preferred, for some reason,

to walk like a groom carrying two pails. He looked like a sort of Super-jockey; as if some archangel had gone on the Turf. And I shall never forget the half-hour in which he and I argued about real things for the first and the last time.

Along the front of the big building of which our school was a part ran a huge slope of stone steps, higher, I think, than those that lead up to St. Paul's Cathedral. On a black wintry evening he and I were wandering on these cold heights, which seemed as dreary as a pyramid under the stars. The one thing visible below us in the blackness was a burning and blowing fire; for some gardener (I suppose) was burning something in the grounds, and from time to time the red sparks went whirling past us like a swarm of scarlet insects in the dark. Above us also it was gloom; but if one stared long enough at that upper darkness, one saw vertical stripes of grey in the black and then became conscious of the colossal façade of the Doric building, phantasmal, yet filling the sky, as if Heaven were still filled with the gigantic ghost of Paganism.

The man asked me abruptly why I was becoming orthodox. Until he said it, I really had not known that I was; but the moment he had said it I knew it to be literally true. And the process had been so long and full that I answered him at once, out of existing stores of explanation.

"I am becoming orthodox," I said, "because I have come, rightly or wrongly, after stretching my brain till it bursts, to the old belief that heresy is worse even than sin. An error is more menacing than a crime, for an error begets crimes. An Im-

THE DIABOLIST

perialist is worse than a pirate. For an Imperialist keeps a school for pirates; he teaches piracy disinterestedly and without an adequate salary. A Free Lover is worse than a profligate. For a profligate is serious and reckless even in his shortest love; while a Free Lover is cautious and irresponsible even in his longest devotion. I hate modern doubt, because it is dangerous."

"You mean dangerous to morality," he said in a voice of wonderful gentleness. "I expect you are right. But why do you care about morality?"

I glanced at his face quickly. He had thrust out his neck as he had a trick of doing; and so brought his face abruptly into the light of the bonfire from below, like a face in the footlights. His long chin and high cheek-bones were lit up infernally from underneath; so that he looked like a fiend staring down into the flaming pit. I had an unmeaning sense of being tempted in a wilderness; and even as I paused a burst of red sparks broke past.

"Aren't those sparks splendid?" I said.

"Yes," he replied.

"That is all that I ask you to admit," said I. "Give me those few red specks and I will deduce Christian morality. Once I thought like you, that one's pleasure in a flying spark was a thing that could come and go with that spark. Once I thought that the delight was as free as the fire. Once I thought that red star we see was alone in space. But now I know that the red star is only on the apex of an invisible pyramid of virtues. That red fire is only the flower on a stalk of living habits, which you cannot see. Only because your mother made you say 'Thank you' for a bun are you now able to thank Nature or chaos for those red stars

of an instant or for the white stars of all time. Only because you were humble before fireworks on the fifth of November do you now enjoy any fireworks that you chance to see. You only like them being red because you were told about the blood of the martyrs; you only like them being bright because brightness is a glory. That flame flowered out of virtues, and it will fade with virtues. Seduce a woman, and that spark will be less bright. Shed blood, and that spark will be less red. Be really bad, and they will be to you like the spots on a wall-paper."

He had a horrible fairness of the intellect that made me despair of his soul. A common harmless atheist would have denied that religion produced humility or humility a simple joy: but he admitted both. He only said, "But shall I not find in evil a life of its own? Granted that for every woman I ruin one of those red sparks will go out: will not the expanding pleasure of ruin . . .?"

"Do you see that fire?" I asked. "If we had a real fighting democracy, someone would burn you in it; like the devil-worshipper that you are."

"Perhaps," he said in his tired, fair way. "Only what you call evil I call good."

He went down the great steps alone, and I felt as if I wanted the steps swept and cleaned. I followed later, and as I went to find my hat in the low, dark passage where it hung, I suddenly heard his voice again, but the words were inaudible. I stopped, startled: then I heard the voice of one of the vilest of his associates saying, "Nobody can possibly know." And then I heard those two or three words which I remember in every syllable and cannot forget. I heard the Diabolist say, "I tell you

THE DIABOLIST

I have done everything else. If I do that I shan't know the difference between right and wrong." I rushed out without daring to pause; and as I passed the fire I did not know whether it was hell or the furious love of God.

I have since heard that he died: it may be said, I think, that he committed suicide; though he did it with tools of pleasure, not with tools of pain. God help him, I know the road he went; but I have never known, or even dared to think, what was that place at which he stopped and refrained.

THE ANGRY STREET: A BAD DREAM

I CANNOT remember whether this tale is true or not. If I read it through very carefully I have a suspicion that I should come to the conclusion that it is not. But unfortunately, I cannot read it through very carefully, because, you see, it is not written yet. The image and idea of it clung to me through a great part of my boyhood; I may have dreamt it before I could talk; or told it to myself before I could read; or read it before I could remember. On the whole, however, I am certain that I did not read it. For children have very clear memories about things like that; and of the books of which I was really fond I can still remember not only the shape and bulk and binding, but even the position of the printed words on many of the pages. On the whole, I incline to the opinion that it happened to me before I was born.

At any rate, let us tell the story now with all the advantages of the atmosphere that has clung to it. You may suppose me, for the sake of argument, sitting at lunch in one of those quick-lunch restaurants in the City where men take their food so fast that it has none of the quality of food, and take their half-hour's vacation so fast that it has none of the qualities of leisure. To hurry through one's leisure is the most unbusiness-like of actions. They all wore tall shiny hats as if they could not lose an instant even to hang them on a peg, and

they all had one eye a little off, hypnotized by the huge eye of the clock. In short, they were the slaves of the modern bondage, you could hear their fetters clanking. Each was, in fact, bound by a chain; the heaviest chain ever tied to a man—it is called a watch-chain.

Now, among these there entered and sat down opposite to me a man who almost immediately opened an uninterrupted monologue. He was like all the other men in dress, yet he was startlingly opposite to them all in manner. He wore a high shiny hat and a long frock coat, but he wore them as such solemn things were meant to be worn; he wore the silk hat as if it were a mitre, and the frock coat as if it were the ephod of a high priest. He not only hung his hat up on the peg, but he seemed (such was his stateliness) almost to ask permission of the hat for doing so, and to apologize to the peg for making use of it. When he had sat down on a wooden chair with the air of one considering its feelings and given a sort of slight stoop or bow to the wooden table itself, as if it were an altar, I could not help some comment springing to my lips. For the man was a big, sanguine-faced, prosperous-looking man, and yet he treated everything with a care that almost amounted to nervousness.

For the sake of saying something to express my interest I said, "This furniture is fairly solid; but, of course, people do treat it much too carelessly."

As I looked up doubtfully my eye caught his, and was fixed as his was fixed, in an apocalyptic stare. I had thought him ordinary as he entered, save for his strange, cautious manner; but if the other people had seen him then they would have screamed

and emptied the room. They did not see him, and they went on making a clatter with their forks, and a murmur with their conversation. But the man's face was the face of a maniac.

"Did you mean anything particular by that remark?" he asked at last, and the blood crawled back slowly into his face.

"Nothing whatever," I answered. "One does not mean anything here; it spoils people's digestions."

He leaned back and wiped his broad forehead with a big handkerchief; and yet there seemed to be a sort of regret in his relief.

"I thought perhaps," he said in a low voice, "that another of them had gone wrong."

"If you mean another digestion gone wrong," I said, "I never heard of one here that went right. This is the heart of the Empire, and the other organs are in an equally bad way."

"No, I mean another street gone wrong;" and he said heavily and quietly, "but as I suppose that doesn't explain much to you, I think I shall have to tell you the story. I do so with all the less responsibility, because I know you won't believe it. For forty years of my life I invariably left my office, which is in Leadenhall Street, at half-past five in the afternoon, taking with me an umbrella in the right hand and a bag in the left hand. For forty years two months and four days I passed out of the side office door, walked down the street on the left-hand side, took the first turning to the left and the third to the right, from where I bought an evening paper, followed the road on the right-hand side round two obtuse angles, and came out just outside a Metropolitan station, where I took a train home. For forty years, two months and four days I fulfilled

this course by accumulated habit: it was not a long street that I traversed, and it took me about four and a half minutes to do it. After forty years two months and four days, on the fifth day I went out in the same manner, with my umbrella in the right hand and my bag in the left, and I began to notice that walking along the familiar street tired me somewhat more than usual. At first I thought I must be breathless and out of condition; though this, again, seemed unnatural, as my habits had always been like clockwork. But after a little while I became convinced that the road was distinctly on a more steep incline than I had known previously; I was positively panting uphill. Owing to this no doubt the corner of the street seemed farther off than usual; and when I turned it I was convinced that I had turned down the wrong one. For now the street shot up quite a steep slant, such as one only sees in the hilly parts of London, and in this part there were no hills at all. Yet it was not the wrong street. The name written on it was the same; the shuttered shops were the same; the lamp-posts and the whole look of the perspective was the same; only it was tilted upwards like a lid. Forgetting any trouble about breathlessness or fatigue, I ran furiously forward, and reached the second of my accustomed turnings, which ought to bring me almost within sight of the station. And as I turned that corner I nearly fell on the pavement. For now the street went up straight in front of my face like a steep staircase or the side of a pyramid. There was not for miles round that place so much as a slope like that of Ludgate Hill. And this was a slope like that of the Matterhorn. The whole street had lifted itself like a single wave, and yet every speck and

detail of it was the same, and I saw in the high distance, as at the top of an Alpine pass, picked out in pink letters the name over my paper shop.

"I ran on and on blindly now, passing all the shops, and coming to a part of the road where there was a long grey row of private houses. I had, I know not why, an irrational feeling that I was on a long iron bridge in empty space. An impulse seized me, and I pulled up the iron trap of a coal-hole. Looking down through it I saw empty space and the stars.

"When I looked up again a man was standing in his front garden, having apparently come out of his house; he was leaning over the railings and gazing at me. We were all alone on that nightmare road; his face was in shadow; his dress was dark and ordinary; but when I saw him standing so perfectly still I knew somehow that he was not of this world. And the stars behind his head were larger and fiercer than ought to be endured by the eyes of men.

"‘If you are a kind angel,’ I said, ‘or a wise devil, or have anything in common with mankind, tell me what is this street possessed of devils,’

"After a long silence he said, ‘What do you say that it is?’

"‘It is Bampton Street, of course,’ I snapped.

‘It goes to Oldgate Station.’

"‘Yes’ he admitted gravely; ‘it goes there sometimes. Just now, however, it is going to heaven.’

"‘To heaven?’ I said. ‘Why?’

"‘It is going to heaven for justice,’ he replied. ‘You must have treated it badly. Remember always that there is one thing that cannot be en-

duced by anybody or anything. That one unendurable thing is to be overworked and also neglected. For instance, you can overwork women—everybody does. But you can't neglect women—I defy you to. At the same time, you can neglect tramps and gipsies and all the apparent refuse of the State, so long as you do not overwork them. But no beast of the field, no horse, no dog can endure long to be asked to do more than his work and yet have less than his honour. It is the same with streets. You have worked this street to death, and yet you have never remembered its existence. If you had owned a healthy democracy, even of pagans, they would have hung this street with garlands and given it the name of a god. Then it would have gone quietly. But at last the street has grown tired of your tireless insolence; and it is bucking and rearing its head to heaven. Have you never sat on a bucking horse?

"I looked at the long grey street, and for a moment it seemed to me to be exactly like the long grey neck of a horse flung up to heaven. But in a moment my sanity returned, and I said, 'But this is all nonsense. Streets go to the place they have to go to. A street must always go to its end.'

"Why do you think so of a street?' he asked, standing very still.

"Because I have always seen it do the same thing," I replied, in reasonable anger. "Day after day, year after year, it has always gone to Oldgate Station; day after . . ."

"I stopped, for he had flung up his head with the fury of the road in revolt.

"And you?" he cried terribly. "What do you

CHESTERTON'S ESSAYS

think the road thinks of you? Does the road think you are alive? Are you alive? Day after day, year after year, *you* have gone to Oldgate Station . . . Since then I have respected the things called inanimate."

And bowing slightly to the mustard-pot, the man in the restaurant withdrew.

THE SHOP OF GHOSTS: A GOOD DREAM

NEARLY all the best and most precious things in the universe you can get for a halfpenny. I make an exception, of course, of the sun, the moon, the earth, people, stars, thunderstorms, and such trifles. You can get them for nothing. But the general principle will be at once apparent. In the street behind me, for instance, you can now get a ride on an electric tram for a halfpenny. To be on an electric tram is to be on a flying castle in a fairy tale. You can get quite a large number of brightly coloured sweets for a halfpenny.

But if you want to see what a vast and bewildering array of valuable things you can get at a halfpenny each, you should do as I was doing last night. I was gluing my nose against the glass of a very small and dimly lit toy-shop in one of the greyest and leanest of the streets of Battersea. But dim as was that square of light, it was filled (as a child once said to me) with all the colours God ever made. Those toys of the poor were like the children who buy them; they were all dirty; but they were all bright. For my part, I think brightness more important than cleanliness; since the first is of the soul, and the second of the body. You must excuse me; I am a democrat; I know I am out of fashion in the modern world.

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As I looked at that palace of pigmy wonders, at small green omnibuses, at small blue elephants, at small black dolls, and small red Noah's arks, I must

have fallen into some sort of unnatural trance. That lit shop-window became like the brilliantly lit stage when one is watching some highly coloured comedy. I forgot the grey houses and the grimy people behind me as one forgets the dark galleries and the dim crowds at a theatre. It seemed as if the little objects behind the glass were small, not because they were toys, but because they were objects far away. The green omnibus was really a green omnibus, a green Bayswater omnibus, passing across some huge desert on its ordinary way to Bayswater. The blue elephant was no longer blue with paint; he was blue with distance. The black doll was really a negro relieved against passionate tropic foliage in the land where every weed is flaming and only man is black. The red Noah's ark was really the enormous ship of earthly salvation riding on the rain-swollen sea, red in the first morning of hope.

Every one, I suppose, knows such stunning instants of abstraction, such brilliant blanks in the mind. In such moments one can see the face of one's own best friend as an unmeaning pattern of spectacles or moustaches. They are commonly marked by the two signs of the slowness of their growth and the suddenness of their termination. The return to real thinking is often as abrupt as bumping into a man. Very often indeed (in my case) it is bumping into a man. But in any case the awakening is always emphatic and, generally speaking, it is always complete. Now, in this case, I did come back with a shock of sanity to the consciousness that I was, after all, only staring into a dingy little toy-shop; but in some strange way the mental cure did not seem to be final. There was

still in my mind an unmanageable something that told me that I had strayed into some odd atmosphere, or that I had already done some odd thing. I felt as if I had worked a miracle or committed a sin. It was as if I had (at any rate) stepped across some border in the soul.

To shake off this dangerous and dreamy sense I went into the shop and tried to buy wooden soldiers. The man in the shop was very old and broken, with confused white hair covering his head and half his face, hair so startlingly white that it looked almost artificial. Yet though he was senile and even sick, there was nothing of suffering in his eyes; he looked rather as if he were gradually falling asleep in a not unkindly decay. He gave me the wooden soldiers, but when I put down the money he did not at first seem to see it; then he blinked at it feebly, and then he pushed it feebly away.

"No, no," he said vaguely. "I never have. I never have. We are rather old-fashioned here."

"Not taking money," I replied, "seems to me more like an uncommonly new fashion than an old one."

"I never have," said the old man, blinking and blowing his nose; "I've always given presents. I'm too old to stop."

"Good heavens!" I said. "What can you mean? Why, you might be Father Christmas."

"I am Father Christmas," he said apologetically, and blew his nose again.

The lamps could not have been lighted yet in the street outside. At any rate, I could see nothing against the darkness but the shining shop-window. There were no sounds of steps or voices in the street; I might have strayed into some new and

sunless world. But something had cut the cords of common sense, and I could not feel even surprise except sleepily. Something made me say, "You look ill, Father Christmas."

"I am dying," he said.

I did not speak, and it was he who spoke again.

"All the new people have left my shop. I cannot understand it. They seem to object to me on such curious and inconsistent sort of grounds, these scientific men, and these innovators. They say that I give people superstitions and make them too visionary; they say I give people sausages and make them too coarse. They say my heavenly parts are too heavenly; they say my earthly parts are too earthly; I don't know what they want, I'm sure. How can heavenly things be too heavenly, or earthly things too earthly? How can one be too good, or too jolly? I don't understand. But I understand one thing well enough. These modern people are living and I am dead."

"You may be dead," I replied. "You ought to know. But as for what they are doing—do not call it living."

A silence fell suddenly between us which I somehow expected to be unbroken. But it had not fallen for more than a few seconds when, in the utter stillness, I distinctly heard a very rapid step coming nearer and nearer along the street. The next moment a figure flung itself into the shop and stood framed in the doorway. He wore a large white hat tilted back as if in impatience; he had tight bright old-fashioned pantaloons, a gaudy old-fashioned stock and waistcoat, and an old fantastic coat. He had large wide-open luminous eyes like those of an

SHOP OF GHOSTS: A GOOD DREAM

arresting actor; he had a fiery nervous face, and a fringe of beard. He took in the shop and the old man in a look that seemed literally a flash, and uttered the exclamation of a man utterly staggered.

"Good lord!" he cried out; "it can't be you! It isn't you! I came to ask where your grave was."

"I'm not dead yet, Mr. Dickens," said the old gentlemen, with a feeble smile; "but I'm dying," he hastened to add reassuringly.

"But, dash it all, you were dying in my time," said Mr. Charles Dickens, with animation; "and you don't look a day older."

"I've felt like this for a long time," said Father Christmas.

Mr. Dickens turned his back and put his head out of the door into the darkness.

"Dick," he roared at the top of his voice, "he's still alive."

Another shadow darkened the doorway, and a much larger and more full-blooded gentleman in an enormous periwig came in, fanning his flushed face with a military hat of the cut of Queen Anne. He carried his head well back like a soldier, and his hot face had even a look of arrogance, which was suddenly contradicted by his eyes, which were literally as humble as a dog's. His sword made a great clatter, as if the shop were too small for it.

"Indeed," said Sir Richard Steele, "'tis a most prodigious matter, for the man was dying when we wrote about Sir Roger de Coverley and his Christmas Day."

My senses were growing dimmer and the room

darker. It seemed to be filled with new-comers.

"It hath ever been understood," said a burly man, who carried his head humorously and obstinately a little on one side—I think he was Ben Jonson—"It hath ever been understood, consule Jacobo, under our King James and her late Majesty, that such good and hearty customs were fallen sick, and like to pass from the world. This grey beard most surely was no lustier when I knew him than now."

And I also thought I heard a green-clad man, like Robin Hood, say in some mixed Norman French, "But I saw the man dying."

"I have felt like this a long time," said Father Christmas in his feeble way again.

Mr. Charles Dickens suddenly leant across to him.

"Since when?" he asked. "Since you were born?"

"Yes," said the old man, and sank shaking into a chair. "I have been always dying."

Mr. Dickens took off his hat with a flourish like a man calling a mob to rise.

"I understand it now," he cried; "you will never die."

THE BALLADE OF A STRANGE TOWN

MY friend and I, in fooling about Flanders, fell into a fixed affection for the town of Mechlin or Malines. Our rest there was so restful that we almost felt it as a home, and hardly strayed out of it.

We sat day after day in the market-place, under little trees growing in wooden tubs, and looked up at the noble converging lines of the Cathedral tower, from which the three riders from Ghent, in the poem, heard the bell which told them they were not too late. But we took as much pleasure in the people, in the little boys with open, flat Flemish faces and fur collars round their necks, making them look like burgomasters; or the women whose prim, oval faces, hair strained tightly off the temples, and mouths at once hard, meek, and humorous, exactly reproduced the late mediæval faces in Memling and Van Eyck.

But one afternoon, as it happened, my friend rose from under his little tree, and, pointing to a sort of toy train that was puffing smoke in one corner of the clear square, suggested that we should go by it. We got into the little train, which was meant really to take the peasants and their vegetables to and fro from their fields beyond the town, and the official came round to give us tickets. We asked him what place we should get to if we paid five-pence. The Belgians are not a romantic people, and he asked us (with a lamentable mixture of

Flemish coarseness and French rationalism) where we wanted to go.

We explained that we wanted to go to fairyland, and the only question was whether we could get there for fivepence. At last, after a great deal of international misunderstanding (for he spoke French in the Flemish and we in the English manner), he told us that fivepence would take us to a place which I have never seen written down, but which when spoken sounded like the word "Waterloo" pronounced by an intoxicated patriot; I think it was Waerlowe. We clasped our hands and said it was the place that we had been seeking from boyhood, and when we had got there we descended with promptitude.

For a moment I had a horrible fear that it really was the field of Waterloo; but I was comforted by remembering that it was in quite a different part of Belgium. It was a cross-roads, with one cottage at the corner, a perspective of tall trees like Hobbema's "Avenue," and beyond only the infinite flat chess-board of the little fields. It was the scene of peace and prosperity; but I must confess that my friend's first action was to ask the man when there would be another train back to Mechlin. The man stated that there would be a train back in exactly one hour. We walked up the avenue, and when we were nearly half an hour's walk away it began to rain.

We arrived back at the cross-roads sodden and dripping, and, finding the train waiting, climbed into it with some relief. The officer on this train could speak nothing but Flemish, but he understood the name of Mechlin, and indicated that

BALLADE OF A STRANGE TOWN

when we came to Mechlin Station he would put us down, which, after the right interval of time, he did.

We got down, under a steady downpour, evidently on the edge of Mechlin, though the features could not easily be recognized through the grey screen of the rain. I do not generally agree with those who find rain depressing. A shower-bath is not depressing; it is rather startling. And if it is exciting when a man throws a pail of water over you, why should it not also be exciting when the gods throw many pails? But on this soaking afternoon, whether it was the dull sky-line of the Netherlands or the fact that we were returning home without any adventure, I really did think things a trifle dreary. As soon as we could creep under the shelter of a street we turned into a little café, kept by one woman. She was incredibly old, and she spoke no French. There we drank black coffee and what was called "cognac fine." "Cognac fine" were the only two French words used in the establishment, and they were not true. At least, the fineness (perhaps by its very ethereal delicacy) escaped me. After a little my friend, who was more restless than I, got up and went out, to see if the rain had stopped and if we could at once stroll back to our hotel by the station. I sat finishing my coffee in a colourless mood, and listening to the unremitting rain.

Suddenly the door burst open, and my friend appeared, transfigured and frantic.

"Get up!" he cried, waving his hands wildly. "Get up! We're in the wrong town! We're not in Mechlin at all. Mechlin is ten miles, twenty

miles off—God knows what! We're somewhere near Antwerp."

"What!" I cried, leaping from my seat, and sending the furniture flying. "Then all is well, after all! Poetry only hid her face for an instant behind a cloud. Positively for a moment I was feeling depressed because we were in the right town. But if we are in the wrong town—why, we have our adventure after all! If we are in the wrong town, we are in the right place."

I rushed out into the rain, and my friend followed me somewhat more grimly. We discovered we were in a town called Lierre, which seemed to consist chiefly of bankrupt pastrycooks who sold lemonade.

"This is the peak of our whole poetic progress!" I cried enthusiastically. "We must do something, something sacramental and commemorative! We cannot sacrifice an ox, and it would be a bore to build a temple. Let us write a poem."

With but slight encouragement, I took out an old envelope and one of those pencils that turn bright violet in water. There was plenty of water about, and the violet ran down the paper, symbolizing the rich purple of that romantic hour. I began, choosing the form of an old French ballade; it is the easiest because it is the most restricted:

"Can Man to Mount Olympus rise,
And fancy Primrose Hill the scene?
Can a man walk in Paradise
And think he is Turnham Green?
And could I take you for Malines,
Not knowing the nobler thing you were?
O Pearl of all the plain, and queen,
The lovely city of Lierre.

BALLADE OF A STRANGE TOWN

Through memory's mist in glimmering guise
Shall shine your streets of sloppy sheen.
And wet shall grow my dreaming eyes
To think how wet my boots have been.
Now if I die or shoot a Dean——”

Here I broke off to ask my friend whether he thought it expressed a more wild calamity to shoot a Dean or to be a Dean. But he only turned up his coat collar, and I felt that for him the muse had folded her wings. I re-wrote:

Now if I die a Rural Dean,
Or rob a bank I do not care,
Or turn a Tory. I have seen
The lovely city of Lierre.”

“The next line,” I resumed, warming to it; but my friend interrupted me.

“The next line,” he said somewhat harshly, “will be a railway line. We can get back to Mechlin from here, I find, though we have to change twice. I dare say I should think this jolly romantic but for the weather. Adventure is the champagne of life, but I prefer my champagne and my adventures dry. Here is the station.”

We did not speak again until we had left Lierre, in its sacred cloud of rain, and were coming to Mechlin, under a clearer sky, that even made one think of stars. Then I leant forward and said to my friend in a low voice:

“I have found out everything. We have come to the wrong star.”

He stared his query, and I went on eagerly:

"That is what makes life at once so splendid and so strange. We are in the wrong world. When I thought that was the right town, it bored me; when I knew it was wrong, I was happy. So the false optimism, the modern happiness, tires us because it tells us we fit into this world. The true happiness is that we don't fit. We come from somewhere else. We have lost our way."

He silently nodded, staring out of the window, but whether I had impressed or only fatigued him I could not tell. "This," I added, "is suggested in the last verse of a fine poem you have grossly neglected:

" Happy is he and more than wise
Who sees with wondering eyes and clean
This world through all the grey disguise
Of sleep and custom in between.

" Yes; we may pass the heavenly screen,
But shall we know when we are there?
Who know not what these dead stones mean,
The lovely city of Lierre.' "

Here the train stopped abruptly. And from Mechlin church steeple we heard the half-chime: and Joris broke silence with "No bally *hors d'œuvres* for me: I shall get on to something solid at once."

L'ENVOY

Prince, wide your Empire spreads, I ween,
Yet happier is that moistened Mayor,
Who drinks her cognac far from *fine*,
The lovely city of Lierre.

THE APPETITE OF EARTH

I WAS walking the other day in a kitchen garden, which I find has somehow got attached to my premises, and I was wondering why I liked it. After a prolonged spiritual self-analysis I came to the conclusion that I like a kitchen garden because it contains things to eat. I do not mean that a kitchen garden is ugly; a kitchen garden is often very beautiful. The mixture of green and purple on some monstrous cabbage is much subtler and grander than the mere freakish and theatrical splashing of yellow and violet on a pansy. Few of the flowers merely meant for ornament are so ethereal as a potato. A kitchen garden is as beautiful as an orchard; but why is it that the word "orchard" sounds as beautiful as the word "flower-garden," and yet also sounds more satisfactory? I suggest again my extraordinarily dark and delicate discovery: that it contains things to eat.

The cabbage is a solid; it can be approached from all sides at once; it can be realized by all senses at once. Compared with that the sunflower, which can only be seen, is a mere pattern, a thing painted on a flat wall. Now, it is this sense of the solidity of things that can only be uttered by the metaphor of eating. To express the cubic content of a turnip, you must be all round it at once. The only way to get all round a turnip at once is to eat the turnip. I think any poetic mind that has loved solidity, the thickness of trees, the squareness of stones, the firmness of clay, must have sometimes

wished that they were things to eat. If only brown peat tasted as good as it looks; if only white fir-wood were digestible! We talk rightly of giving stones for bread: but there are in the Geological Museum certain rich crimson marbles, certain split stones of blue and green, that make me wish my teeth were stronger.

Somebody staring into the sky with the same ethereal appetite declared that the moon was made of green cheese. I never could conscientiously accept the full doctrine. I am Modernist in this matter. That the moon is made of cheese I have believed from childhood; and in the course of every month a giant (of my acquaintance) bites a big round piece out of it. This seems to me a doctrine that is above reason, but not contrary to it. But that the cheese is green seems to be in some degree actually contradicted by the senses and the reason; first because if the moon were made of green cheese it would be inhabited; and second because if it were made of green cheese it would be green. A blue moon is said to be an unusual sight; but I cannot think that a green one is much more common. In fact, I think I have seen the moon looking like every other sort of cheese except a green cheese. I have seen it look exactly like a cream cheese: a circle of warm white upon a warm faint violet sky above a corn-field in Kent. I have seen it look very like a Dutch cheese, rising a dull red copper disk amid masts and dark waters at Honfleur. I have seen it look like an ordinary sensible Cheddar cheese in an ordinary sensible Prussian blue sky; and I have once seen it so naked and ruinous-looking, so strangely lit up, that it looked like a Gruyère

cheese, that awful volcanic cheese that has horrible holes in it, as if it had come in boiling unnatural milk from mysterious and unearthly cattle. But I have never yet seen the lunar cheese green; and I incline to the opinion that the moon is not old enough. The moon, like everything else, will ripen by the end of the world; and in the last days we shall see it taking on those volcanic sunset colours, and leaping with that enormous and fantastic life.

But this is a parenthesis; and one perhaps slightly lacking in prosaic actuality. Whatever may be the value of the above speculations, the phrase about the moon and green cheese remains a good example of this imagery of eating and drinking on a large scale. The same huge fancy is in the phrase "if all the trees were bread and cheese," which I have cited elsewhere in this connection; and in that noble nightmare of a Scandinavian legend, in which Thor drinks the deep sea near dry out of a horn. In an essay like the present (first intended as a paper to be read before the Royal Society) one cannot be too exact; and I will concede that my theory of the gradual vire-scence of our satellite is to be regarded rather as an alternative theory than as a law finally demonstrated and universally accepted by the scientific world. It is a hypothesis that holds the field, as the scientists say of a theory when there is no evidence for it so far.

But the reader need be under no apprehension that I have suddenly gone mad, and shall start biting large pieces out of the trunks of trees; or seriously altering (by large semi-circular mouthfuls) the exquisite outline of the mountains. This feeling for expressing a fresh solidity by the image

of eating is really a very old one. So far from being a paradox of perversity, it is one of the oldest commonplaces of religion. If any one wandering about wants to have a good trick or test for separating the wrong idealism from the right, I will give him one on the spot. It is a mark of false religion that it is always trying to express concrete facts as abstract; it calls sex affinity; it calls wine alcohol; it calls brute starvation the economic problem. The test of true religion is that its energy drives exactly the other way; it is always trying to make men feel truths as facts; always trying to make abstract things as plain and solid as concrete things; always trying to make men, not merely admit the truth, but see, smell, handle, hear, and devour the truth. All great spiritual scriptures are full of the invitation not to test, but to taste; not to examine, but to eat. Their phrases are full of living water and heavenly bread, mysterious manna and dreadful wine. Worldliness, and the polite society of the world, has despised this instinct of eating; but religion has never despised it. When we look at a firm, fat, white cliff of chalk at Dover, I do not suggest that we should desire to eat it; that would be highly abnormal. But I really mean that we should think it good to eat; good for some one else to eat. For, indeed, some one else is eating it; the grass that grows upon its top is devouring it silently, but, doubtless, with an uproarious appetite.

THE RED TOWN

WHEN a man says that democracy is false because most people are stupid, there are several courses which the philosopher may pursue. The most obvious is to hit him smartly and with precision on the exact tip of the nose. But if you have scruples (moral or physical) about this course, you may proceed to employ Reason, which in this case has all the savage solidity of a blow with the fist. It is stupid to say that "most people" are stupid. It is like saying "most people are tall," when it is obvious that "tall" can only mean taller than most people. It is absurd to denounce the majority of mankind as below the average of mankind.

Should the man have been hammered on the nose and brained with logic, and should he still remain cold, a third course opens: lead him by the hand (himself half-willing) towards some sunlit and yet secret meadow and ask him who made the names of the common wild flowers. They were ordinary people, so far as any one knows, who gave to one flower the name of the Star of Bethlehem and to another and much commoner flower the tremendous title of the Eye of Day. If you cling to the snobbish notion that common people are prosaic, ask any common person for the local names of the flowers, names which vary not only from county to county, but even from dale to dale.

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But, curiously enough, the case is much stronger than this. It will be said that this poetry is peculiar

to the country populace, and that the dim democracies of our modern towns at least have lost it. For some extraordinary reason they have not lost it. Ordinary London slang is full of witty things said by nobody in particular. True, the creed of our cruel cities is not so sane and just as the creed of the old countryside; but the people are just as clever in giving names to their sins in the city as in giving names to their joys in the wilderness. One could not better sum up Christianity than by calling a small white insignificant flower "The Star of Bethlehem." But then, again, one could not better sum up the philosophy deduced from Darwinism than in the one verbal picture of "having your monkey up."

Who first invented these violent felicities of language? Who first spoke of a man "being off his head?" The obvious comment on a lunatic is that his head is off him; yet the other phrase is far more fantastically exact. There is about every madman a singular sensation that his body has walked off and left the important part of him behind.

But the cases of this popular perfection in phrase are even stronger when they are more vulgar. What concentrated irony and imagination there is, for instance, in the metaphor which describes a man doing a midnight flitting as "shooting the moon"? It expresses everything about the run-away: his eccentric occupation, his improbable explanations, his furtive air as of a hunter, his constant glances at the blank clock in the sky.

No; the English democracy is weak enough about a number of things; for instance, it is very weak in politics. But there is no doubt that the democracy is wonderfully strong in literature.

THE RED TOWN

Very few books that the cultured class has produced of late have been such good literature as the expression "painting the town red."

Oddly enough, this last Cockney epigram clings to my memory. For as I was walking a little while ago round a corner near Victoria I realized for the first time that a familiar lamp-post was painted all over with a bright vermilion, just as if it were trying (in spite of obvious bodily disqualifications) to pretend that it was a pillar-box. I have since heard official explanations of these startling and scarlet objects. But my first fancy was that some dissipated gentleman on his way home at four o'clock in the morning had attempted to paint the town red and got only as far as one lamp-post.

I began to make a fairy tale about the man; and, indeed, this phrase contains both a fairy tale and a philosophy; it really states almost the whole truth about those pure outbreaks of pagan enjoyment to which all healthy men have often been tempted. It expresses the desire to have levity on a large scale which is the essence of such a mood. The rowdy young man is not content to paint his tutor's door green: he would like to paint the whole city scarlet. The word which to us best recalls such gigantesque idiocy is the word "mafficking." The slaves of that saturnalia were not only painting the town red; they thought that they were painting the map red—that they were painting the world red. But, indeed, this Imperial debauch has in it something worse than the mere larkiness which is my present topic; it has an element of real self-flattery and of sin. The Jingo who wants to admire himself is worse than the blackguard who only

wants to enjoy himself. In a very old ninth-century illumination which I have seen, depicting the war of the rebel angels in heaven, Satan is represented as distributing to his followers peacock feathers—the symbols of an evil pride. Satan also distributed peacock feathers to his followers on Mafeking Night.

But taking the case of ordinary pagan recklessness and pleasure seeking, it is, as we have said, well expressed in this image. First, because it conveys this notion of filling the world with one private folly; and secondly, because of the profound idea involved in the choice of colour. Red is the most joyful and dreadful thing in the physical universe; it is the fiercest note, it is the highest light, it is the place where the walls of this world of ours wear thinnest and something beyond burns through. It glows in the blood which sustains and in the fire which destroys us, in the roses of our romance and in the awful cup of our religion. It stands for all passionate happiness, as in faith or in first love.

Now, the profligate is he who wishes to spread this crimson of conscious joy over everything; to have excitement at every moment; to paint everything red. He bursts a thousand barrels of wine to incarnadine the streets; and sometimes (in his last madness) he will butcher beasts and men to dip his gigantic brushes in their blood. For it marks the sacredness of red in nature, that it is secret even when it is ubiquitous, like blood in the human body, which is omnipresent, yet invisible. As long as blood lives it is hidden; it is only dead blood that we see. But the earlier parts of the

THE RED TOWN

rake's progress are very natural and amusing. Painting the town red is a delightful thing until it is done. It would be splendid to see the cross of St. Paul's as red as the cross of St. George, and the gallons of red paint running down the dome or dripping from the Nelson Column. But when it is done, when you have painted the town red, an extraordinary thing happens. You cannot see any red at all.

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I can see, as in a sort of vision, the successful artist standing in the midst of that frightful city, hung on all sides with the scarlet of his shame. And then, when everything is red, he will long for a red rose in a green hedge and long in vain; he will dream of a red leaf and be unable even to imagine it. He has desecrated the divine colour, and he can no longer see it, though it is all around. I see him, a single black figure against the red-hot hell that he has kindled, where spires and turrets stand up like immobile flames: he is stiffened in a sort of agony of prayer. Then the mercy of Heaven is loosened, and I see one or two flakes of snow very slowly begin to fall.

A CRIMINAL HEAD

WHEN men of science (or, more often, men who talk about science) speak of studying history or human society scientifically they always forget that there are two quite distinct questions involved. It may be that certain facts of the body go with certain facts of the soul, but it by no means follows that a grasp of such facts of the body goes with a grasp of the things of the soul. A man may show very learnedly that certain mixtures of race make a happy community, but he may be quite wrong (he generally is) about what communities are happy. A man may explain scientifically how a certain physical type involves a really bad man, but he may be quite wrong (he generally is) about which sort of man is really bad. Thus his whole argument is useless, for he understands only one half of the equation.

The drearier kind of don may come to me and say, "Celts are unsuccessful; look at Irishmen, for instance." To which I should reply, "You may know all about Celts; but it is obvious that you know nothing about Irishmen. The Irish are not in the least unsuccessful, unless it is unsuccessful to wander from their own country over a great part of the earth in which case the English are unsuccessful too." A man with a bumpy head may say to me (as a kind of New Year greeting), "Fools have microcephalous skulls," or what not. To which I shall reply, "In order to be certain of that, you must be a good judge

both of the physical and of the mental fact. It is not enough that you should know a microcephalous skull when you see it. It is also necessary that you should know a fool when you see him; and I have a suspicion that you do not know a fool when you see him, even after the most lifelong and intimate of all forms of acquaintanceship."

The trouble with most sociologists, criminologists, etc., is that while their knowledge of their own details is exhaustive and subtle, their knowledge of man and society, to which these are to be applied, is quite exceptionally superficial and silly. They know everything about biology, but almost nothing about life. Their ideas of history, for instance, are simply cheap and uneducated. Thus some famous and foolish professor measured the skull of Charlotte Corday to ascertain the criminal type; he had not historical knowledge enough to know that if there is any "criminal type," certainly Charlotte Corday had not got it. The skull, I believe, afterwards turned out not to be Charlotte Corday's at all; but that is another story. The point is that the poor old man was trying to match Charlotte Corday's mind with her skull without knowing anything whatever about her mind.

But I came yesterday upon a yet more crude and startling example.

In a popular magazine there is one of the usual articles about criminology; about whether wicked men could be made good if their heads were taken to pieces. As by far the wickedest men I know of are much too rich and powerful ever to submit to the process, the speculation leaves me cold. I always notice with pain, however, a curious absence of the portraits of living millionaires from such

galleries of awful examples; most of the portraits in which we are called upon to remark the line of the nose or the curve of the forehead appear to be the portraits of ordinary sad men, who stole because they were hungry or killed because they were in a rage. The physical peculiarity seems to vary infinitely; sometimes it is the remarkable square head, sometimes it is the unmistakable round head; sometimes the learned draw attention to the abnormal development, sometimes to the striking deficiency of the back of the head. I have tried to discover what is the invariable factor, the one permanent mark of the scientific criminal type; after exhaustive classification I have to come to the conclusion that it consists in being poor.

But it was among the pictures in this article that I received the final shock; the enlightenment which has left me in lasting possession of the fact that criminologists are generally more ignorant than criminals. Among the starved and bitter, but quite human, faces was one head, neat but old-fashioned, with the powder of the 18th century and a certain almost pert primness in the dress which marked the conventions of the upper middle-class about 1790. The face was lean and lifted stiffly up, the eyes stared forward with a frightful sincerity, the lip was firm with a heroic firmness; all the more pathetic because of a certain delicacy and deficiency of male force. Without knowing who it was, one could have guessed that it was a man in the manner of Shakespeare's Brutus, a man of piercingly pure intentions, prone to use government as a mere machine for morality, very sensitive to the charge of inconsistency and a little too proud of his own clean and honourable life. I say I should have known this

almost from the face alone, even if I had not known who it was.

But I did know who it was. It was Robespierre. And underneath the portrait of this pale and too eager moralist were written these remarkable words: "Deficiency of ethical instincts," followed by something to the effect that he knew no mercy (which is certainly untrue), and by some nonsense about a retreating forehead, a peculiarity which he shared with Louis XVI. and with half the people of his time and ours.

Then it was that I measured the staggering distance between the knowledge and the ignorance of science. Then I knew that all criminology might be worse than worthless, because of its utter ignorance of that human material of which it is supposed to be speaking. The man who could say that Robespierre was deficient in ethical instincts is a man utterly to be disregarded in all calculations of ethics. He might as well say that John Bunyan was deficient in ethical instincts. You may say that Robespierre was morbid and unbalanced, and you may say the same of Bunyan. But if these two men were morbid and unbalanced they were morbid and unbalanced by feeling too much about morality, not by feeling too little. You may say if you like that Robespierre was (in a negative sort of way) mad. But if he was mad he was mad on ethics. He and a company of keen and pugnacious men, intellectually impatient of unreason and wrong, resolved that Europe should not be choked up in every channel by oligarchies and state secrets that already stank. The work was the greatest that was ever given to men to do except that which Christianity did in dragging Europe out of the abyss of barbarism after the Dark Ages. But

they did it, and no one else could have done it.

Certainly we could not do it. We are not ready to fight all Europe on a point of justice. We are not ready to fling our most powerful class as mere refuse to the foreigner; we are not ready to shatter the great estates at a stroke; we are not ready to trust ourselves in an awful moment of utter dissolution in order to make all things seem intelligible and all men feel honourable henceforth. We are not strong enough to be as strong as Danton. We are not strong enough to be as weak as Robespierre. There is only one thing, it seems, that we can do. Like a mob of children, we can play games upon this ancient battlefield; we can pull up the bones and skulls of the tyrants and martyrs of that unimaginable war; and we can chatter to each other childishly and innocently about skulls that are imbecile and heads that are criminal.

I do not know whose heads are criminal, but I think I know whose are imbecile.

HOW I FOUND THE SUPERMAN

READERS of Mr. Bernard Shaw and other modern writers may be interested to know that the Superman has been found. I found him; he lives in South Croydon. My success will be a great blow to Mr. Shaw, who has been following quite a false scent, and is now looking for the creature in Blackpool; and as for Mr. Wells's notion of generating him out of gases in a private laboratory, I always thought it doomed to failure. I assure Mr. Wells that the Superman at Croydon was born in the ordinary way, though he himself, of course, is anything but ordinary.

Nor are his parents unworthy of the wonderful being whom they have given to the world. The name of Lady Hypatia Smythe-Browne (now Lady Hypatia Hagg) will never be forgotten in the East End, where she did such splendid social work. Her constant cry of "Save the children!" referred to the cruel neglect of children's eyesight involved in allowing them to play with crudely painted toys. She quoted unanswerable statistics to prove that children allowed to look at violet and vermilion often suffered from failing eyesight in their extreme old age; and it was owing to her ceaseless crusade that the pestilence of the Monkey-on-the-Stick was almost swept from Hoxton. The devoted worker would tramp the streets untiringly, taking away the toys from all the poor children, who were often moved to tears by her kindness. Her good work was interrupted, partly by a new interest in the

creed of Zoroaster, and partly by a savage blow from an umbrella. It was inflicted by a dissolute Irish apple-woman, who, on returning from some orgy to her ill-kept apartment, found Lady Hypatia in the bedroom taking down an oleograph, which, to say the least of it, could not really elevate the mind. At this the ignorant and partly intoxicated Celt dealt the social reformer a severe blow, adding to it an absurd accusation of theft. The lady's exquisitely balanced mind received a shock, and it was during a short mental illness that she married Dr. Hagg.

Of Dr. Hagg himself I hope there is no need to speak. Any one even slightly acquainted with those daring experiments in Neo-Individualist Eugenics, which are now the one absorbing interest of the English democracy, must know his name and often commend it to the personal protection of an impersonal power. Early in life he brought to bear that ruthless insight into the history of religions which he had gained in boyhood as an electrical engineer. Later he became one of our greatest geologists; and achieved that bold and bright outlook upon the future of Socialism which only geology can give. At first there seemed something like a rift, a faint, but perceptible, fissure, between his views and those of his aristocratic wife. For she was in favour (to use her own powerful epigram) of protecting the poor against themselves; while he declared pitilessly, in a new and striking metaphor, that the weakest must go to the wall. Eventually, however, the married pair perceived an essential union in the unmistakably modern character of both their views; and in this enlightening and intelligible formula their souls found peace. The result is that this

HOW I FOUND THE SUPERMAN

union of the two highest types of our civilization, the fashionable lady and the all but vulgar medical man, has been blessed by the birth of the Superman, that being whom all the labourers in Battersea are so eagerly expecting night and day.

I found the house of Dr. and Lady Hypatia Hagg without much difficulty; it is situated in one of the last straggling streets of Croydon, and overlooked by a line of poplars. I reached the door towards the twilight, and it was natural that I should fancifully see something dark and monstrous in the dim bulk of that house which contained the creature who was more marvellous than the children of men. When I entered the house I was received with exquisite courtesy by Lady Hypatia and her husband; but I found much greater difficulty in actually seeing the Superman, who is now about fifteen years old, and is kept by himself in a quiet room. Even my conversation with the father and mother did not quite clear up the character of this mysterious being. Lady Hypatia, who has a pale and poignant face, and is clad in those impalpable and pathetic greys and greens with which she has brightened so many homes in Hoxton, did not appear to talk of her offspring with any of the vulgar vanity of an ordinary human mother. I took a bold step and asked if the Superman was nice looking.

"He creates his own standard, you see," she replied, with a slight sigh. "Upon that plane he is more than Apollo. Seen from our lower plane, of course——" And she sighed again.

I had a horrible impulse, and said suddenly, "Has he got any hair?"

There was a long and painful silence, and then Dr. Hagg said smoothly: "Everything upon that plane is different; what he has got is not . . . well, not, of course, what we call hair . . . but——"

"Don't you think," said his wife, very softly, "don't you think that really, for the sake of argument, when talking to the mere public, one might call it hair?"

"Perhaps you are right," said the doctor after a few moments' reflection. "In connexion with hair like that one must speak in parables."

"Well, what on earth is it," I asked in some irritation, "if it isn't hair? Is it feathers?"

"Not feathers, as we understand feathers," answered Hagg in an awful voice.

I got up in some irritation. "Can I see him, at any rate?" I asked. "I am a journalist, and have no earthly motives except curiosity and personal vanity. I should like to say that I had shaken hands with the Superman."

The husband and wife had both got heavily to their feet, and stood, embarrassed.

"Well, of course, you know," said Lady Hypatia, with the really charming smile of the aristocratic hostess. "You know he can't exactly shake hands . . . not hands, you know. . . . The structure, of course——"

I broke out of all social bounds, and rushed at the door of the room which I thought to contain the incredible creature. I burst it open; the room was pitch dark. But from in front of me came a small sad yelp, and from behind me a double shriek.

"You have done it, now!" cried Dr. Hagg, burying his bald brow in his hands. "You have let in a draught on him; and he is dead."

HOW I FOUND THE SUPERMAN

As I walked away from Croydon that night I saw men in black carrying out a coffin that was not of any human shape. The wind wailed above me, whirling the poplars, so that they drooped and nodded like the plumes of some cosmic funeral. "It is, indeed," said Dr. Hagg, "the whole universe weeping over the frustration of its most magnificent birth." But I thought that there was a hoot of laughter in the high wail of the wind.

THE GARDEN OF THE SEA

ONE sometimes hears from persons of the chillier type of culture the remark that plain country people do not appreciate the beauty of the country. This is an error rooted in the intellectual pride of mediocrity; and is one of the many examples of a truth in the idea that extremes meet. Thus, to appreciate the virtues of the mob one must either be on a level with it (as I am) or be really high up, like the saints. It is roughly the same with æsthetics; slang and rude dialect can be relished by a really literary taste, but not by a merely bookish taste. And when these cultivated cranks say that rustics do not talk of Nature in an appreciative way, they really mean that they do not talk in a bookish way. They do not talk bookishly about clouds or stones, or pigs or slugs, or horses or anything you please. They talk piggishly about pigs; and sluggishly, I suppose, about slugs; and are refreshingly horsey about horses. They speak in a stony way of stones; they speak in a cloudy way of clouds; and this is surely the right way. And if by any chance a simple intelligent person from the country comes in contact with any aspect of Nature unfamiliar and arresting, such a person's comment is always worth remark. It is sometimes an epigram, and at worst it is never a quotation.

Consider, for instance, what wastes of wordy imitation and ambiguity the ordinary educated person in the big towns could pour out on the subject of the sea. A country girl I know in the

county of Buckingham had never seen the sea in her life until the other day. When she was asked what she thought of it she said it was like cauliflowers. Now that is a piece of pure literature—vivid, entirely independent and original, and perfectly true. I had always been haunted with an analogous kinship which I could never locate; cabbages always remind me of the sea and the sea always reminds me of cabbages. It is partly perhaps, the veined mingling of violet and green, as in the sea a purple that is almost dark red may mix with a green that is almost yellow, and still be the blue sea as a whole. But it is more the grand curves of the cabbage that curl over cavernously like waves, and it is partly again that dreamy repetition, as of a pattern, that made two great poets, Æschylus and Shakespeare, use a word like "multitudinous" of the ocean. But just where my fancy halted the Buckinghamshire young woman rushed (so to speak) to my imaginative rescue. Cauliflowers are twenty times better than cabbages, for they show the wave breaking as well as curling, and the efflorescence of the branching foam, blind, bubbling, and opaque. Moreover, the strong lines of life are suggested; the arches of the rushing waves have all the rigid energy of green stalks, as if the whole sea were one great green plant with one immense white flower rooted in the abyss.

Now, a large number of delicate and superior persons would refuse to see the force in that kitchen garden comparison, because it is not connected with any of the ordinary maritime sentiments as stated in books and songs. The æsthetic amateur would say that he knew what large and philosophical thoughts he ought to have by the boundless deep.

He would say that he was not a greengrocer who would think first of greens. To which I should reply, like Hamlet, apropos of a parallel profession, "I would you were so honest a man." The mention of "Hamlet" reminds me, by the way, that besides the girl who had never seen the sea, I knew a girl who had never seen a stage-play. She was taken to "Hamlet," and she said it was very sad. There is another case of going to the primordial point which is overlaid by learning and secondary impressions. We are so used to thinking of "Hamlet" as a problem that we sometimes quite forget that it is a tragedy, just as we are so used to thinking of the sea as vast and vague, that we scarcely notice when it is white and green.

But there is another quarrel involved in which the young gentleman of culture comes into violent collision with the young lady of the cauliflowers. The first essential of the merely bookish view of the sea is that it is boundless, and gives a sentiment of infinity. Now it is quite certain, I think, that the cauliflower simile was partly created by exactly the opposite impression, the impression of boundary and of barrier. The girl thought of it as a field of vegetables, even as a yard of vegetables. The girl was right. The ocean only suggests infinity when you cannot see it; a sea mist may seem endless, but not a sea. So far from being vague and vanishing, the sea is the one hard straight line in Nature. It is the one plain limit; the only thing that God has made that really looks like a wall. Compared to the sea, not only sun and cloud are chaotic and doubtful, but solid mountains and standing forests may be said to melt and fade and flee in the presence of that lonely iron line. The old naval phrase,

THE GARDEN OF THE SEA

that the seas are England's bulwarks, is not a frigid and artificial metaphor; it came into the head of some genuine sea-dog, when he was genuinely looking at the sea. For the edge of the sea is like the edge of a sword; it is sharp, military, and decisive; it really looks like a bolt or bar, and not like a mere expansion. It hangs in heaven, grey, or green, or blue, changing in colour, but changeless in form, behind all the slippery contours of the land and all the savage softness of the forests, like the scales of God held even. It hangs, a perpetual reminder of that divine reason and justice which abides behind all compromises and all legitimate variety; the one straight line; the limit of the intellect; the dark and ultimate dogma of the world.

THE GARDENER AND THE GUINEA

STRICTLY speaking, there is no such thing as an English Peasant. Indeed, the type can only exist in community, so much does it depend on co-operation and common laws. One must not think primarily of a French Peasant, any more than of a German Measle. The plural of the word is its proper form; you cannot have a Peasant till you have a peasantry. The essence of the Peasant ideal is equality; and you cannot be equal all by yourself.

Nevertheless, because human nature always craves and half creates the things necessary to its happiness, there are approximations and suggestions of the possibility of such a race even here. The nearest approach I know to the temper of a Peasant in England is that of the country gardener; not, of course, the great scientific gardener attached to the great houses; he is a rich man's servant like any other. I mean the small jobbing gardener who works for two or three moderate-sized gardens; who works on his own; who sometimes even owns his house; and who frequently owns his tools. This kind of man has really some of the characteristics of the true Peasant—especially the characteristics that people don't like. He has none of that irresponsible mirth which is the consolation of most poor men in England. The gardener is even disliked sometimes by the owners of the shrubs and flowers; because (like Micaiah) he prophesies not good concerning them, but evil. The English gardener is grim, critical, self-respecting; sometimes even

THE GARDENER AND THE GUINEA

economical. Nor is this (as the reader's lightning wit will flash back at me) merely because the English gardener is always a Scotch gardener. The type does exist in pure South England blood and speech; I have spoken to the type. I was speaking to the type only the other evening, when a rather odd little incident occurred.

It was one of those wonderful evenings in which the sky was warm and radiant while the earth was still comparatively cold and wet. But it is of the essence of Spring to be unexpected; as in that heroic and hackneyed line about coming "before the swallow dares." Spring never is Spring unless it comes too soon. And on a day like that one might pray, without any profanity, that Spring might come on earth, as it was in heaven. The gardener was gardening. I was not gardening. It is needless to explain the causes of this difference; it would be to tell the tremendous history of two souls. It is needless because there is a more immediate explanation of the case: the gardener and I, if not equal in agreement, were at least equal in difference. It is quite certain that he would not have allowed me to touch the garden if I had gone down on my knees to him. And it is by no means certain that I should have consented to touch the garden if he had gone down on his knees to me. His activity and my idleness, therefore, went on steadily side by side through the long sunset hours.

And all the time I was thinking what a shame it was that he was not sticking his spade into his own garden, instead of mine: he knew about the earth and the underworld of seeds, the resurrection of Spring and the flowers that appear in order like

a procession marshalled by a herald. He possessed the garden intellectually and spiritually, while I only possessed it politically. I know more about flowers than coal-owners know about coal; for at least I pay them honour when they are brought above the surface of the earth. I know more about gardens than railway shareholders seem to know about railways: for at least I know that it needs a man to make a garden; a man whose name is Adam. But as I walked on that grass my ignorance overwhelmed me—and yet that phrase is false, because it suggests something like a storm from the sky above. It is truer to say that my ignorance exploded underneath me, like a mine dug long before; and indeed it was dug before the beginning of the ages. Green bombs of bulbs and seeds were bursting underneath me everywhere; and, so far as my knowledge went, they had been laid by a conspirator. I trod quite uneasily on this uprush of the earth; the Spring is always only a fruitful earthquake. With the land all alive under me I began to wonder more and more why this man, who had made the garden, did not own the garden. If I stuck a spade into the ground, I should be astonished at what I found there . . . and just as I thought this I saw that the gardener was astonished too.

Just as I was wondering why the man who used the spade did not profit by the spade, he brought me something he had found actually in my soil. It was a thin worn gold piece of the Georges, of the sort which are called, I believe, Spade Guineas. Anyhow, a piece of gold.

If you do not see the parable as I saw it just then, I doubt if I can explain it just now. He could make a

THE GARDENER AND THE GUINEA

hundred other round yellow fruits: and this flat yellow one is the only sort that I can make. How it came there I have not a notion—unless Edmund Burke dropped it in his hurry to get back to Butler's Court. But there it was: this is a cold recital of facts. There may be a whole pirate's treasure lying under the earth there, for all I know or care; for there is no interest in a treasure without a Treasure Island to sail to. If there is a treasure it will never be found, for I am not interested in wealth beyond the dreams of avarice—since I know that avarice has no dreams, but only insomnia. And, for the other party, my gardener would never consent to dig up the garden.

Nevertheless, I was overwhelmed with intellectual emotions when I saw that answer to my question; the question of why the garden did not belong to the gardener. No better epigram could be put in reply than simply putting the Spade Guinea beside the Spade. This was the only underground seed that I could understand. Only by having a little more of that dull, battered yellow substance could I manage to be idle while he was active. I am not altogether idle myself; but the fact remains that the power is in the thin slip of metal we call the Spade Guinea, not in the strong square and curve of metal which we call the Spade. And then I suddenly remembered that as I had found gold on my ground by accident, so richer men in the north and west counties had found coal in their ground, also by accident.

I told the gardener that as he had found the thing he ought to keep it, but that if he cared to sell it to me it could be valued properly, and then sold. He said, at first with characteristic independence,

that he would like to keep it. He said it would make a brooch for his wife. But a little later he brought it back to me without explanation. I could not get a ray of light on the reason of his refusal; but he looked lowering and unhappy. Had he some mystical instinct that it is just such accidental and irrational wealth that is the doom of all peasantries? Perhaps he dimly felt that the boy's pirate tales are true; and that buried treasure is a thing for robbers and not for producers. Perhaps he thought there was a curse on such capital: on the coal of the coal-owners, on the gold of the gold-seekers. Perhaps there is.

THE MAD OFFICIAL

GOING mad is the slowest and dullest business in the world. I have very nearly done it more than once in my boyhood, and so have nearly all my friends, born under the general doom of mortals, but especially of moderns; I mean the doom that makes a man come almost to the end of thinking before he comes to the first chance of living.

But the process of going mad is dull, for the simple reason that a man does not know that it is going on. Routine and literalism and a certain dry-throated earnestness and mental thirst, these are the very atmosphere of morbidity. If once the man could become conscious of his madness, he would cease to be man. He studies certain texts in Daniel or cryptograms in Shakespeare through monstrously magnifying spectacles, which are on his nose night and day. If once he could take off the spectacles he would smash them. He deduces all his fantasies about the Sixth Seal or the Anglo-Saxon Race from one unexamined and invisible first principle. If he could once see the first principle, he would see that it is not there.

This slow and awful self-hypnotism of error is a process that can occur not only with individuals, but also with whole societies. It is hard to pick out and prove; that is why it is hard to cure. But this mental degeneration may be brought to one test, which I truly believe to be a real test. A nation is not going mad when it does extravagant things, so long as it does them in an extravagant spirit.

Crusaders not cutting their beards till they found Jerusalem, Jacobins calling each other Harmodius and Epaminondas when their names were Jacques and Jules: these are wild things, but they were done in wild spirits at a wild moment.

But whenever we see things done wildly, but taken tamely, then the State is growing insane. For instance, I have a gun licence. For all I know, this would logically allow me to fire off fifty-nine enormous field-guns day and night in my back garden. I should not be surprised at a man doing it; for it would be great fun. But I should be surprised at the neighbours putting up with it, and regarding it as an ordinary thing merely because it might happen to fulfil the letter of my licence.

Or, again, I have a dog licence; and I may have the right (for all I know) to turn ten thousand wild dogs loose in Buckinghamshire. I should not be surprised if the law were like that; because in modern England there is practically no law to be surprised at. I should not be surprised even at the man who did it; for a certain kind of man, if he lived long under the English landlord system, might do anything. But I should be surprised at the people who consented to stand it. I should, in other words, think the world a little mad if the incident were received in silence.

Now things every bit as wild as this are being received in silence every day. All strokes slip on the smoothness of a polished wall. All blows fall soundless on the softness of a padded cell. For madness is a passive as well as an active state: it is a paralysis, a refusal of the nerves to respond to the



this would logically allow me to fire off fifty-nine
enormous field guns day and night.

normal stimuli, as well as an unnatural stimulation. There are commonwealths, plainly to be distinguished here and there in history, which pass from prosperity to squalor, or from glory to insignificance, or from freedom to slavery, not only in silence, but with serenity. The face still smiles while the limbs, literally and loathsomely, are dropping from the body. These are peoples that have lost the power of astonishment at their own actions. When they give birth to a fantastic fashion or a foolish law, they do not start or stare at the monster they have brought forth. They have grown used to their own unreason; chaos is their cosmos; and the whirlwind is the breath of their nostrils. These nations are really in danger of going off their heads *en masse*; of becoming one vast vision of imbecility, with toppling cities and crazy countryside, all dotted with industrious lunatics. One of these countries is modern England.

Now here is an actual instance, a small case of how our social conscience really works: tame in spirit, wild in result, blank in realization; a thing without the light of mind in it. I take this paragraph from a daily paper:—

“At Epping, yesterday, Thomas Woolbourne, a Lambourne labourer, and his wife were summoned for neglecting their five children. Dr. Alpin said he was invited by the inspector of the N.S.P.C.C. to visit defendants’ cottage. Both the cottage and the children were dirty. The children looked exceedingly well in health, but the conditions would be serious in case of illness. Defendants were stated to be sober. The man was discharged. The woman,

who said she was hampered by the cottage having no water supply and that she was ill, was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment. The sentence caused surprise, and the woman was removed crying. 'Lord, save me!'

I know no name for this but Chinese. It calls up the mental picture of some archaic and changeless Eastern Court, in which men with dried faces and stiff ceremonial costumes perform some atrocious cruelty to the accompaniment of formal proverbs and sentences of which the very meaning has been forgotten. In both cases the only thing in the whole farrago that can be called real is the wrong. If we apply the lightest touch of reason to the whole Epping prosecution it dissolves into nothing.

I here challenge any person in his five wits to tell me what that woman was sent to prison for. Either it was for being poor, or it was for being ill. Nobody could suggest, nobody will suggest, nobody, as a matter of fact, did suggest that she had committed any other crime. The doctor was called in by a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Was this woman guilty of cruelty to children? Not in the least. Did the doctor say she was guilty of cruelty to children? Not in the least. Was there any evidence even remotely bearing on the sin of cruelty? Not a rap. The worst that the doctor could work himself up to saying was that though the children were "exceedingly" well, the conditions would be serious in case of illness. If the doctor will tell me any conditions that would be comic in case of illness, I shall attach more weight to his argument.

Now this is the worst effect of modern worry.

THE MAD OFFICIAL

The mad doctor has gone mad. He is literally and practically mad; and still he is quite literally and practically a doctor. The only question is the old one, *Quis docebit ipsum doctorem?* Now cruelty to children is an utterly unnatural thing; instinctively accursed of earth and heaven. But neglect of children is a natural thing; like neglect of any other duty. It is a mere difference of degree that divides extending arms and legs in calisthenics and extending them on the rack. It is a mere difference of degree that separates any operation from any torture. The thumb-screw can easily be called Manicure. Being pulled about by wild horses can easily be called Massage. The modern problem is not so much what people will endure as what they will not endure. But I fear I interrupt. . . . The boiling oil is boiling; and the Tenth Mandarin is already reciting the "Seventeen Serious Principles and the Fifty-three Virtues of the Sacred Emperor."

THE HYPOTHETICAL HOUSEHOLDER

WE have read of some celebrated philosopher who was so absent-minded that he paid a call at his own house. My own absent-mindedness is extreme, and my philosophy, of course, is the marvel of men and angels. But I never quite managed to be so absent-minded as that. Some yards at least from my own door something vaguely familiar has always caught my eye; and thus the joke has been spoiled. Of course I have quite constantly walked into another man's house, thinking it was my own house; my visits became almost monotonous. But walking into my own house and thinking it was another man's house is a flight of poetic detachment still beyond me. Something of the sensations that such an absent-minded man must feel I really felt the other day; and very pleasant sensations they were. The best parts of every proper romance are the first chapter and the last chapter; and to knock at a strange door and find a nice wife would be to concentrate the beginning and end of all romance.

Mine was a milder and slighter experience, but its thrill was of the same kind. For I strolled through a place I had imagined quite virgin and unvisited (as far as I was concerned), and I suddenly found I was treading in my own footprints, and the footprints were nearly twenty years old.

It was one of those stretches of country which always suggest an almost unnatural decay; thickets and heaths that have grown out of what were once

THE HYPOTHETICAL HOUSEHOLDER

great gardens. Garden flowers still grow there as wild flowers, as it says in some good poetic couplet which I forget; and there is something singularly romantic and disastrous about seeing things that were so long a human property and care fighting for their own hand in the thicket. One almost expects to find a decayed dog-kennel; with the dog evolved into a wolf.

This desolate garden-land had been even in my youth scrappily planned out for building. The half-built or empty houses had appeared quite threateningly on the edge of this heath even when I walked over it years ago and almost as a boy. I was astonished that the building had gone no farther; I suppose somebody went bankrupt and somebody else disliked building. But I remember, especially along one side of this tangle or coppice, that there had once been a row of half-built houses. The brick of which they were built was a sort of plain pink; everything else was a blinding white; the houses smoked with white dust and white sawdust; and on many of the windows were rubbed those round rough disks of white which always delighted me as a child. They looked like the white eyes of some blind giant.

I could see the crude, parched, pink-and-white villas still, though I had not thought at all of them for a quarter of my life, and had not thought much of them even when I saw them. Then I was an idle, but eager youth walking out from London; now I was a most reluctantly busy middle-aged person coming in from the country. Youth, I think, seems farther off than childhood, for it made itself more of a secret. Like a prenatal picture, distant, tiny, and quite distinct, I saw this heath on which I

stood; and I looked around for the string of bright, half-baked villas. They still stood there; but they were quite russet and weather-stained, as if they had stood for centuries.

I remembered exactly what I had done on that day long ago. I had half slid on a miry descent: it was still there; a little lower I had knocked off the top of a thistle: the thistles had not been discouraged, but were still growing. I recalled it because I had wondered why one knocks off the tops of thistles; and then I had thought of Tarquin; and then I had recited most of Macaulay's *Virginus* to myself, for I was young. And then I came to a tattered edge where the very tuft had whitened with the sawdust and brick-dust from the new row of houses; and two or three green stars of dock and thistle grew spasmodically about the blinding road.

I remembered how I had walked up this new one-sided street all those years ago; and I remembered what I had thought. I thought that this red and white glaring terrace at noon was really more creepy and more lonesome than a glimmering churchyard at midnight. The churchyard could only be full of the ghosts of the dead; but these houses were full of the ghosts of the unborn. And a man can never find a home in the future as he can find it in the past. I was always fascinated by that mediæval notion of erecting a rudely carpentered stage in the street, and acting on it a miracle play of the Holy Family or the Last Judgment. And I thought to myself that each of these glaring, gaping, new jerry-built boxes was indeed a rickety stage erected for the acting of a real miracle play; of that human family that is almost the holy one,

THE HYPOTHETICAL HOUSEHOLDER

and of that human death that is near to the last judgment.

For some foolish reason the last house but one in that imperfect row especially haunted me with its hollow grin and empty window-eyes. Something in the shape of this brick-and-mortar skeleton was attractive; and there being no workmen about, I strolled into it for curiosity and solitude. I gave, with all the sky-deep gravity of youth, a benediction upon the man who was going to live there. I even remember that for the convenience of meditation I called him James Harrogate.

As I reflected it crawled back into my memory that I had mildly played the fool in that house on that distant day. I had some red chalk in my pocket, I think, and I wrote things on the unpap^{er}ed plaster walls; things addressed to Mr. Harrogate. A dim memory told me that I had written up in what I supposed to be the dining-room:

James Harrogate, thank God for meat,
'Then eat and eat and eat and eat,

or something of that kind. I faintly feel that some longer lyric was scrawled on the walls of what looked like a bedroom, something beginning:

When laying what you call your head,
O Harrogate, upon your bed,

and there all my memory dislimns and decays. But I could still see quite vividly the plain plastered walls and the rude, irregular writing, and the places where the red chalk broke. I could see them, I mean, in memory; for when I came down that

road again after a sixth of a century the house was very different.

I had seen it before at noon, and now I found it in the dusk. But its windows glowed with lights of many artificial sorts; one of its low square windows stood open; from this there escaped up the road a stream of lamplight and a stream of singing. Some sort of girl, at least, was standing at some sort of piano, and singing a song of healthy sentimentalism in that house where long ago my blessing had died on the wind and my poems been covered up by the wallpaper. I stood outside that lamplit house at dusk full of those thoughts that I shall never express if I live to be a million any better than I expressed them in red chalk upon the wall. But after I had hovered a little, and was about to withdraw, a mad impulse seized me. I rang the bell. I said in distinct accents to a very smart suburban maid, "Does Mr. James Harrogate live here?"

She said he didn't; but that she would inquire, in case I was looking for him in the neighbourhood; but I excused her from such exertion. I had one moment's impulse to look for him all over the world; and then decided not to look for him at all.

THE PRIEST OF SPRING

THE sun has strengthened and the air softened just before Easter Day. But it is a troubled brightness which has a breath not only of novelty but of revolution. There are two great armies of the human intellect who will fight till the end on this vital point, whether Easter is to be congratulated on fitting in with the Spring—or the Spring on fitting in with Easter.

The only two things that can satisfy the soul are a person and a story; and even a story must be about a person. There are indeed very voluptuous appetites and enjoyments in mere abstractions—like mathematics, logic, or chess. But these mere pleasures of the mind are like mere pleasures of the body. That is, they are mere pleasures, though they may be gigantic pleasures; they can never by a mere increase of themselves amount to happiness. A man just about to be hanged may enjoy his breakfast, especially if it be his favourite breakfast; and in the same way he may enjoy an argument with the chaplain about heresy, especially if it is his favourite heresy. But whether he can enjoy either of them does not depend on either of them; it depends upon his spiritual attitude towards, a subsequent event. And that event is really interesting to the soul; because it is the end of a story and (as some hold) the end of a person.

Now it is this simple truth which, like many others, is too simple for our scientists to see. This

is where they go wrong, not only about true religion, but about false religions too; so that their account of mythology is more mythical than the myth itself. I do not confine myself to saying that they are quite incorrect when they state (for instance) that Christ was a legend of dying and reviving vegetation, like Adonis or Persephone. I say that even if Adonis was a god of vegetation, they have got the whole notion of him wrong. Nobody, to begin with, is sufficiently interested in decaying vegetables, as such, to make any particular mystery or disguise about them; and certainly not enough to disguise them under the image of a very handsome young man, which is a vastly more interesting thing. If Adonis was connected with the fall of leaves in autumn and the return of flowers in spring, the process of thought was quite different. It is a process of thought which springs up spontaneously in all children and young artists; it springs up spontaneously in all healthy societies. It is very difficult to explain in a diseased society.

The brain of man is subject to short and strange snatches of sleep. A cloud seals the city of reason or rests upon the sea of imagination; a dream that darkens as much, whether it is a nightmare of atheism or a day-dream of idolatry. And just as we have all sprung from sleep with a start and found ourselves saying some sentence that has no meaning, save in the mad tongues of the midnight, so the human mind starts from its trances of stupidity with some complete phrase upon its lips: a complete phrase which is a complete folly. Unfortunately it is not like the dream sentence, generally forgotten in the putting on of boots or the putting in of breakfast. This senseless aphorism, invented when

THE PRIEST OF SPRING

man's mind was asleep, still hangs on his tongue and entangles all his relations to rational and daylight things. All our controversies are confused by certain kinds of phrases which are not merely untrue, but were always unmeaning; which are not merely inapplicable, but were always intrinsically useless. We recognize them wherever a man talks of "the survival of the fittest," meaning only the survival of the survivors; or wherever a man says that the rich "have a stake in the country," as if the poor could not suffer from misgovernment or military defeat; or where a man talks about "going on towards Progress," which only means going on towards going on; or when a man talks about "government by the wise few," as if they could be picked out by their pantaloons. "The wise few" must mean either the few whom the foolish think wise or the very foolish who think themselves wise.

There is one piece of nonsense that modern people still find themselves saying, even after they are more or less awake, by which I am particularly irritated. It arose in the popularized science of the nineteenth century, especially in connection with the study of myths and religions. The fragment of gibberish to which I refer generally takes the form of saying "This god or hero really represents the sun." Or "Apollo killing the Python *means* that the summer drives out the winter." Or "The King dying in a western battle is a *symbol* of the sun setting in the west." Now I should really have thought that even the sceptical professors, whose skulls are as shallow as frying-pans, might have reflected that human beings never think or feel like this. Consider what is involved in this supposition. It presumed that primitive man went out for a

walk and saw with great interest a big burning spot on the sky. He then said to primitive woman, "My dear, we had better keep this quiet. We mustn't let it get about. The children and the slaves are so very sharp. They might discover the sun any day, unless we are very careful. So we won't call it 'the sun,' but I will draw a picture of a man killing a snake; and whenever I do that you will know what I mean. The sun doesn't look at all like a man killing a snake; so nobody can possibly know. It will be a little secret between us; and while the slaves and the children fancy I am quite excited with a grand tale of a writhing dragon and a wrestling demigod, I shall really *mean* this delicious little discovery, that there is a round yellow disk up in the air." One does not need to know much about mythology to know that this is a myth. It is commonly called the Solar Myth.

Quite plainly, of course, the case was just the other way. The god was never a symbol or hieroglyph representing the sun. The sun was a hieroglyph representing the god. Primitive man (with whom my friend Dombey is no doubt well acquainted) went out with his head full of gods and heroes, because that is the chief use of having a head. Then he saw the sun in some glorious crisis of the dominance of noon or the distress of nightfall, and he said, "That is how the face of the god would shine when he had slain the dragon," or "That is how the whole world would bleed to westward, if the god were slain at last."

No human being was ever really so unnatural as to worship Nature. No man, however indulgent (as I am) to corpulency, ever worshipped a man as round as the sun or a woman as round as the moon.

THE PRIEST OF SPRING

No man, however attracted to an artistic attenuation, ever really believed that the Dryad was as lean and stiff as the tree. We human beings have never worshipped Nature; and indeed, the reason is very simple. It is that all human beings are superhuman beings. We have printed our own image upon Nature, as God has printed His image upon us. We have told the enormous sun to stand still; we have fixed him on our shields, caring no more for a star than for a starfish. And when there were powers of Nature we could not for the time control, we have conceived great beings in human shape controlling them. Jupiter does not mean thunder. Thunder means the march and victory of Jupiter. Neptune does not mean the sea; the sea is his, and he made it. In other words, what the savage really said about the sea was, "Only my fetish Mumbo could raise such mountains out of mere water." What the savage really said about the sun was, "Only my great-great-grandfather Jumbo could deserve such a blazing crown."

About all these myths my own position is utterly and even sadly simple. I say you cannot really understand any myths till you have found that one of them is not a myth. Turnip ghosts mean nothing if there are no real ghosts. Forged bank-notes mean nothing if there are no real bank-notes. Heathen gods mean nothing, and must always mean nothing, to those of us that deny the Christian God. When once a god is admitted, even a false god, the Cosmos begins to know its place: which is the second place. When once it is the real God the Cosmos falls down before Him, offering flowers in spring as flames in winter. "My love is like a red, red rose" does not mean that the poet is praising roses under the

allegory of a young lady. "My love is an arbutus" does not mean that the author was a botanist so pleased with a particular arbutus tree that he said he loved it. "Who art the moon and regent of my sky" does not mean that Juliet invented Romeo to account for the roundness of the moon. "Christ is the Sun of Easter" does not mean that the worshipper is praising the sun under the emblem of Christ. Goddess or god can clothe themselves with the spring or summer; but the body is more than raiment. Religion takes almost disdainfully the dress of Nature; and indeed Christianity has done as well with the snows of Christmas as with the snowdrops of spring. And when I look across the sun-struck fields, I know in my inmost bones that my joy is not solely in the spring: for spring alone, being always returning, would be always sad. There is somebody or something walking there, to be crowned with flowers: and my pleasure is in some promise yet possible and in the resurrection of the dead.

THE MYSTAGOGUE

WHenever you hear much of things being unutterably indefinable and impalpable and unnamable and subtly indescribable then elevate your aristocratic nose towards heaven and snuff up the smell of decay. It is perfectly true that there is something in all good things that is beyond all speech or figure of speech. But it is also true that there is in all good things a perpetual desire for expression and concrete embodiment; and though the attempt to embody it is always inadequate, the attempt is always made. If the idea does not seek to be the word, the chances are that it is an evil idea. If the word is not made flesh it is a bad word.

Thus Giotto or Fra Angelico would have at once admitted theologically that God was too good to be painted; but they would always try to paint Him. And they felt (very rightly) that representing Him as a rather quaint old man with a gold crown and a white beard, like a king of the elves, was less profane than resisting the sacred impulse to express Him in some way. That is why the Christian world is full of gaudy pictures and twisted statues which seem, to many refined persons, more blasphemous than the secret volumes of an atheist. The trend of good is always towards Incarnation. But, on the other hand, those refined thinkers who worship the Devil, whether in the swamps of Jamaica or the *salons* of Paris, always insist upon the shapelessness, the wordlessness, the unutterable character of the abomination. They call him "horror of emptiness,"

as did the black witch in Stevenson's *Dynamiter*; they worship him as the unspeakable name, as the unbearable silence. They think of him as the void in the heart of the whirlwind; the cloud on the brain of the maniac; the toppling turrets of vertigo or the endless corridors of nightmare. It was the Christians who gave the Devil a grotesque and energetic outline, with sharp horns and spiked tail. It was the saints who drew Satan as comic and even lively. The Satanists never drew him at all.

And as it is with moral good and evil, so it is also with mental clarity and mental confusion. There is one very valid test by which we may separate genuine, if perverse and unbalanced, originality and revolt from mere impudent innovation and bluff. The man who really thinks he has an idea will always try to explain that idea. The charlatan who has no idea will always confine himself to explaining that it is much too subtle to be explained. The first idea may really be very *outré* or specialist; it may really be very difficult to express to ordinary people. But because the man is trying to express it, it is most probable that there is something in it, after all. The honest man is he who is always trying to utter the unutterable, to describe the indescribable; but the quack lives not by plunging into mystery, but by refusing to come out of it.

Perhaps this distinction is most comically plain in the case of the thing called Art, and the people called Art Critics. It is obvious that an attractive landscape or a living face can only half express the holy cunning that has made them what they are. It is equally obvious that a landscape painter

expresses only half of the landscape; a portrait painter only half of the person; they are lucky if they express so much. And again it is yet more obvious that any literary description of the pictures can only express half of them, and that the less important half. Still, it does express something; the thread is not broken that connects God with Nature, or Nature with men, or men with critics. The "Mona Lisa" was in some respects (not all, I fancy) what God meant her to be. Leonardo's picture was, in some respects, like the lady. And Walter Pater's rich description was, in some respects, like the picture. Thus we come to the consoling reflection that even literature, in the last resort, can express something other than its own unhappy self.

Now the modern critic is a humbug, because he professes to be entirely inarticulate. Speech is his whole business; and he boasts of being speechless. Before Botticelli he is mute. But if there is any good in Botticelli (there is much good, and much evil too) it is emphatically the critic's business to explain it: to translate it from terms of painting into terms of diction. Of course, the rendering will be inadequate—but so is Botticelli. It is a fact he would be the first to admit. But anything which has been intelligently received can at least be intelligently suggested. Pater does suggest an intelligent cause for the cadaverous colour of Botticelli's "Venus Rising from the Sea." Ruskin does suggest 'an intelligent motive for Turner destroying forests and falsifying landscapes. These two great critics were far too fastidious for my taste; they urged to excess the idea that a sense of art was a sort of secret to be patiently taught and slowly learnt. Still, they

thought it could be taught: they thought it could be learnt. They constrained themselves, with considerable creative fatigue, to find the exact adjectives which might parallel in English prose what has been done in Italian painting. The same is true of Whistler and R.A.M. Stevenson and many others in the exposition of Velasquez. They had something to say about the pictures; they knew it was unworthy of the pictures, but they said it.

Now the eulogists of the latest artistic insanities (Cubism and Post-Impressionism and Mr. Picasso) are eulogists and nothing else. They are not critics; least of all creative critics. They do not attempt to translate beauty into language; they merely tell you that it is untranslatable—that is, unutterable, undefinable, indescribable, impalpable, ineffable, and all the rest of it. The cloud is their banner; they cry to chaos and old night. They circulate a piece of paper on which Mr. Picasso had the misfortune to upset the ink and tried to dry it with his boots, and they seek to terrify democracy by the good old anti-democratic muddlements: that “the public” does not understand these things; that “the likes of us” cannot dare to question the dark decisions of our lords.

I venture to suggest that we resist all this rubbish by the very simple test mentioned above. If there were anything intelligent in such art, something of it at least could be made intelligible in literature. Man is made with one head, not with two or three. No criticism of Rembrandt is as good as Rembrandt; but it can be so written as to make a man go back and look at his pictures. If there is a curious and fantastic art, it is the business of the art critics

THE MYSTAGOGUE

to create a curious and fantastic literary expression for it; inferior to it, doubtless, but still akin to it. If they cannot do this, as they cannot; if there is nothing in their eulogies, as there is nothing except eulogy—then they are quacks or the high-priests of the unutterable. If the art critics can say nothing about the artists except that they are good it is because the artists are bad. They can explain nothing because they have found nothing; and they have found nothing because there is nothing to be found.

THE ROMANTIC IN THE RAIN

THE middle classes of modern England are quite fanatically fond of washing; and are often enthusiastic for teetotalism. I cannot therefore comprehend why it is that they exhibit a mysterious dislike of rain. Rain, that inspiring and delightful thing, surely combines the qualities of these two ideals with quite a curious perfection. Our philanthropists are eager to establish public baths everywhere. Rain surely is a public bath; it might almost be called mixed bathing. The appearance of persons coming fresh from this great natural lustration is not perhaps polished or dignified; but for the matter of that, few people are dignified when coming out of a bath. But the scheme of rain in itself is one of an enormous purification. It realizes the dream of some insane hygienist: it scrubs the sky. Its giant brooms and mops seem to reach the starry rafters and starless corners of the cosmos; it is a cosmic spring-cleaning.

If the Englishman is really fond of cold baths, he ought not to grumble at the English climate for being a cold bath. In these days we are constantly told that we should leave our little special possessions and join in the enjoyment of common social institutions and a common social machinery. I offer the rain as a thoroughly Socialistic institution. It disregards that degraded delicacy which has hitherto led each gentleman to take his shower-bath in private. It is a better shower-bath, because it is

THE ROMANTIC IN THE RAIN

public and communal; and, best of all, because somebody else pulls the string.

As for the fascination of rain for the water drinker, it is a fact the neglect of which I simply cannot comprehend. The enthusiastic water drinker must regard a rainstorm as a sort of universal banquet and debauch of his own favourite beverage. Think of the imaginative intoxication of the wine drinker if the crimson clouds sent down claret or the golden clouds hock. Paint upon primitive darkness some such scenes of apocalypse, towering and gorgeous skyscapes in which champagne falls like fire from heaven or the dark skies grow purple and tawny with the terrible colours of port. All this must the wild abstainer feel, as he rolls in the long soaking grass, kicks his ecstatic heels to heaven, and listens to the roaring rain. It is he, the water drinker, who ought to be the true bacchanal of the forests; for all the forests are drinking water. Moreover, the forests are apparently enjoying it: the trees rave and reel to and fro like drunken giants; they clash boughs as revellers clash cups; they roar undying thirst and howl the health of the world.

All around me as I write is a noise of Nature drinking: and Nature makes a noise when she is drinking, being by no means refined. If I count it Christian mercy to give a cup of cold water to a sufferer, shall I complain of these multitudinous cups of cold water handed round to all living things; a cup of water for every shrub; a cup of water for every weed? I would be ashamed to grumble at it. As Sir Philip Sidney said, their need is greater than mine—especially for water.

There is a wild garment that still carries nobly the name of a wild Highland clan: a clan come from those hills where rain is not so much an incident as an atmosphere. Surely every man of imagination must feel a tempestuous flame of Celtic romance spring up within him whenever he puts on a mackintosh. I could never reconcile myself to carrying an umbrella; it is a pompous Eastern business, carried over the heads of despots in the dry, hot lands. Shut up, an umbrella is an unmanageable walking-stick; open, it is an inadequate tent. For my part, I have no taste for pretending to be a walking pavilion; I think nothing of my hat, and precious little of my head. If I am to be protected against wet, it must be by some closer and more careless protection, something that I can forget altogether. It might be a Highland plaid. It might be that yet more Highland thing, a mackintosh.

And there is really something in the mackintosh of the military qualities of the Highlander. The proper cheap mackintosh has a blue and white sheen as of steel or iron; it gleams like armour. I like to think of it as the uniform of that ancient clan in some of its old and misty raids. I like to think of all the Mackintoshes, in their mackintoshes, descending on some doomed Lowland village, their wet waterproofs flashing in the sun or moon. For indeed this is one of the real beauties of rainy weather, that while the amount of original and direct light is commonly lessened, the number of things that reflect light is unquestionably increased. There is less sunshine, but there are more shiny things, such beautifully shiny things as pools and puddles and mackintoshes. It is like moving in a world of mirrors.

THE ROMANTIC IN THE RAIN

And indeed this is the last and not the least gracious of the casual works of magic wrought by rain: that while it decreases light, yet it doubles it. If it dims the sky, it brightens the earth. It gives the roads (to the sympathetic eye) something of the beauty of Venice. Shallow lakes of water reiterate every detail of earth and sky; we dwell in a double universe. Sometimes walking upon bare and lustrous pavements, wet under numerous lamps, a man seems a black blot on all that golden looking-glass and could fancy he was flying in a yellow sky. But wherever trees and towns hang head downwards in a pigmy puddle, the sense of Celestial topsyturvydom is the same. This bright, wet, dazzling confusion of shape and shadow, of reality and reflection, will appeal strongly to any one with the transcendental instinct about this dreamy and dual life of ours. It will always give a man the strange sense of looking down at the skies.

THE ARCHITECT OF SPEARS

THE other day, in the town of Lincoln, I suffered an optical illusion which accidentally revealed to me the strange greatness of the Gothic architecture. Its secret is not, I think, satisfactorily explained in most of the discussions on the subject. It is said that the Gothic eclipses the classical by a certain richness and complexity, at once lively and mysterious. This is true; but Oriental decoration is equally rich and complex, yet it awakens a widely different sentiment. No man ever got out of a Turkey carpet the emotions that he got from a cathedral^o tower. Over all the exquisite ornament of Arabia and India there is the presence of something stiff and heartless, of something tortured and silent. Dwarfed trees and crooked serpents, heavy flowers and hunchbacked birds accentuate by the very splendour and contrast of their colour the servility and monotony of their shapes. It is like the vision of a sneering sage, who sees the whole universe as a pattern. Certainly no one ever felt like this about Gothic, even if he happens to dislike it. Or, again, some will say that it is the liberty of the Middle Ages in the use of the comic or even the coarse that makes the Gothic more interesting than the Greek. There is more truth in this; indeed, there is real truth in it. Few of the old Christian cathedrals would have passed the Censor of Plays. We talk of the inimitable grandeur of the old cathedrals; but indeed it is rather their gaiety that we do not dare to imitate. We should be rather

surprised if a chorister suddenly began singing "Bill Bailey" in church. Yet that would be only doing in music what the mediævals did in sculpture. They put into a Miserere seat the very scenes that we put into a music-hall song: comic domestic scenes similar to the spilling of the beer and the hanging out of the washing. But though the gaiety of Gothic is one of its features, it also is not the secret of its unique effect. We see a domestic topsy-turvydom in many Japanese sketches. But delightful as these are, with their fairy tree-tops, paper houses, and toddling, infantile inhabitants, the pleasure they give is of a kind quite different from the joy and energy of the gargoyles. Some have even been so shallow and illiterate as to maintain that our pleasure in mediæval building is a mere pleasure in what is barbaric, in what is rough, shapeless, or crumbling like the rocks. This can be dismissed after the same fashion; South Sea idols, with painted eyes and radiating bristles, are a delight to the eye; but they do not affect it in at all the same way as Westminster Abbey. Some again (going to another and almost equally foolish extreme) ignore the coarse and comic in mediævalism, and praise the pointed arch only for its utter purity and simplicity, as of a saint with his hands joined in prayer. Here, again, the uniqueness is missed. There are Renaissance things (such as the ethereal silvery drawings of Raphael), there are even pagan things (such as the Praying Boy), which express as fresh and austere a piety. None of these explanations explain. And I never saw what was the real point about Gothic till I came into the town of Lincoln, and saw it behind a row of furniture-vans.

I did not know they were furniture-vans; at the first glance and in the smoky distance I thought they were a row of cottages. A low stone wall cut off the wheels, and the vans were somewhat of the same colour as the yellowish clay or stone of the buildings around them. I had come across that interminable Eastern plain which is like the open sea, and all the more so because the one small hill and tower of Lincoln stands up in it like a lighthouse. I had climbed the sharp, crooked streets up to this ecclesiastical citadel; just in front of me was a flourishing and richly coloured kitchen garden; beyond that was the low stone wall; beyond that the row of vans that looked like houses; and beyond and above that, straight and swift and dark, light as a flight of birds, and terrible as the Tower of Babel, Lincoln Cathedral seemed to rise out of human sight.

As I looked at it I asked myself the questions that I have asked here; what was the soul in all those stones? They were varied, but it was not variety; they were solemn, but it was not solemnity; they were farcical, but it was not farce. What is it in them that thrills and soothes a man of our blood and history that is not there in an Egyptian pyramid or an Indian temple or a Chinese pagoda? All of a sudden the vans I had mistaken for cottages began to move away to the left. In the start this gave to my eye and mind I really fancied that the Cathedral was moving towards the right. The two huge towers seemed to start striding across the plain like the two legs of some giant whose body was covered with the clouds. Then I saw what it was.

The truth about Gothic is, first, that it is alive, and second, that it is on the march. It is the Church

THE ARCHITECT OF SPEARS

Militant; it is the only fighting architecture. All its spires are spears at rest; and all its stones are stones asleep in a catapult. In that instant of illusion, I could hear the arches clash like swords as they crossed each other. The mighty and numberless columns seemed to go swinging by like the huge feet of imperial elephants. The graven foliage wreathed and blew like banners going into battle; the silence was deafening with all the mingled noises of a military march; the great bell shook down, as the organ shook up, its thunder. The thirsty-throated gargoyles shouted like trumpets from all the roofs and pinnacles as they passed; and from the lectern in the core of the cathedral the eagle of the awful evangelist clashed his wings of brass.

And amid all the noises I seemed to hear the voice of a man shouting in the midst like one ordering regiments hither and thither in the fight; the voice of the great half-military master-builder; the architect of spears. I could almost fancy he wore armour while he made that church; and I knew indeed that, under a scriptural figure, he had borne in either hand the trowel and the sword.

I could imagine for the moment that the whole of that house of life had marched out of the sacred East, alive and interlocked, like an army. Some Eastern nomad had found it solid and silent in the red circle of the desert. He had slept by it as by a world-forgotten pyramid; and been woke at midnight by the wings of stone and brass, the tramping of the tall pillars, the trumpets of the water-spouts. On such a night every snake or sea-beast must have turned and twisted in every crypt or corner of the architecture. And the fiercely coloured

saints marching eternally in the flamboyant windows would have carried their glorioles like torches across dark lands and distant seas; till the whole mountain of music and darkness and light; descended roaring on the lonely Lincoln hill. So for some hundred and sixty seconds I saw the battle-beauty of the Gothic; then the last furniture-van shifted itself away; and I saw only a church tower in a quiet English town, round which the English birds were floating.

TENNYSON

I HAVE been glancing over two or three of the appreciations of Tennyson appropriate to his centenary, and have been struck with a curious tone of coldness towards him in almost all quarters. Now this is really a very peculiar thing. For it is a case of coldness to quite brilliant and unquestionable literary merit. Whether Tennyson was a great poet I shall not discuss. I understand that one has to wait about eight hundred years before discussing that; and my only complaint against the printers of my articles is that they will not wait even for much shorter periods. But that Tennyson was a poet is as solid and certain as that Roberts is a billiard-player. That Tennyson was an astonishingly good poet is as solid and certain as that Roberts is an astonishingly good billiard-player. Even in these matters of art there are some things analogous to matters of fact. It is no good disputing about tastes—partly because some tastes are beyond dispute. If any one tells me that

There is fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate;

or that

Tears from the depth of some divine despair

is not fine poetry, I am quite prepared to treat him as I would one who said that grass was not green or

that I was not corpulent. And by all common chances Tennyson ought to be preserved as a pleasure—a sensuous pleasure if you like, but certainly a genuine one. There is no more reason for dropping Tennyson than for dropping Virgil. We do not mind Virgil's view of Augustus, nor need we mind Tennyson's view of Queen Victoria. Beauty is unanswerable, in a poem as much as in a woman. There were Victorian writers whose art is not perfectly appreciable apart from their enthusiasm. Kingsley's *Yeast* is a fine book, but not quite so fine a book as it seemed when one's own social passions were still yeasty. Browning and Coventry Patmore are justly admired, but they are most admired where they are most agreed with. But *St. Agnes' Eve* is an unimpeachably beautiful poem, whether one believes in St. Agnes or detests her. One would think that a man who had thus left indubitably good verse would receive natural and steady gratitude, like a man who left indubitably good wine to his nephew, or indubitably good pictures to the National Portrait Gallery. Nevertheless, as I have said, the tone of all the papers, modernist or old-fashioned, has been mainly frigid. What is the meaning of this?

I will ask permission to answer this question by abruptly and even brutally changing the subject. My remarks must, first of all, seem irrelevant even to effrontery; they shall prove their relevance later on. In turning the pages of one of the papers containing such a light and unsympathetic treatment of Tennyson, my eye catches the following sentence: "By the light of modern science and thought, we are in a position to see that each normal human being in some way repeats historically the life of the human

race." This is a very typical modern assertion; that is, it is an assertion for which there is not and never has been a single spot or speck of proof. We know precious little about what the life of the human race has been; and none of our scientific conjectures about it bear the remotest resemblance to the actual growth of a child. According to this theory, a baby begins by chipping flints and rubbing sticks together to find fire. One so often sees babies doing this. About the age of five the child, before the delighted eyes of his parents, founds a village community. By the time he is eleven it has become a small city state, the replica of ancient Athens. Encouraged by this, the boy proceeds, and before he is fourteen has founded the Roman Empire. But now his parents have a serious set-back. Having watched him so far, not only with pleasure, but with a very natural surprise, they must strengthen themselves to endure the spectacle of decay. They have now to watch their child going through the decline of the Western Empire and the Dark Ages. They see the invasion of the Huns and that of the Norsemen chasing each other across his expressive face. He seems a little happier after he has "repeated" the Battle of Chalons and the unsuccessful Siege of Paris; and by the time he comes to the twelfth century, his boyish face is as bright as it was of old when he was "repeating" Pericles or Camillus. I have no space to follow this remarkable demonstration of how history repeats itself in the youth; how he grows dismal at twenty-three to represent the end of Mediævalism, brightens because the Renaissance is coming, darkens again with the disputes of the later Reformation, broadens placidly through the thirties as the rational eighteenth century, till at last, about forty-three, he

gives a great yell and begins to burn the house down, as a symbol of the French Revolution. Such (we shall all agree) is the ordinary development of a boy.

Now, seriously, does any one believe a word of such bosh? Does any one think that a child will repeat the periods of human history? Does any one ever allow for a daughter in the Stone Age, or excuse a son because he is in the fourth century B.C. Yet the writer who lays down this splendid and staggering lie calmly says that "by the light of modern science and thought we are in a position to *see*" that it is true. "Seeing" is a strong word to use of our conviction that icebergs are in the north, or that the earth goes round the sun. Yet anybody can use it of any casual or crazy biological fancy seen in some newspaper or suggested in some debating club. This is the rooted weakness of our time. Science, which means exactitude, has become the mother of all inexactitude.

This is the failure of the epoch, and this explains the partial failure of Tennyson. He was *par excellence* the poet of popular science—that is, of all such cloudy and ill-considered assertions as the above. He was the perfectly educated man of classics and the half-educated man of science. No one did more to encourage the colossal blunder that the survival of the fittest means the survival of the best. One might as well say that the survival of the fittest means the survival of the fattest. Tennyson's position has grown shaky because it rested not on any clear dogmas old or new, but on two or three temporary, we might say desperate, compromises of his own day. He grasped at Evolution, not because it was definite, but because it was indefinite; not because it was daring, but because it was safe. It

gave him the hope that man might one day be an angel and England a free democracy; but it soothed him with the assurance that neither of these alarming things would happen just yet. Virgil used his verbal felicities to describe the eternal idea of the Roman Imperium. Tennyson used his verbal felicities for the accidental equilibrium of the British Constitution. "To spare the humble and war down the proud," is a permanent idea for the policing of this planet. But that freedom should "slowly broaden down from precedent to precedent" merely happens to be the policy of the English upper class; it has no vital sanction; it might be much better to broaden quickly. One can write great poetry about a truth or even about a falsehood, but hardly about a legal fiction. The misanthropic idea, as in Byron, is not a truth, but it is one of the immortal lies. As long as humanity exists, humanity can be hated. Wherever one shall gather by himself, Byron is in the midst of him. It is a common and recurrent mood to regard man as a hopeless Yahoo. But it is not a natural mood to regard man as a hopeful Yahoo, as the Evolutionists did, as a creature changing before one's eyes from bestial to beautiful, a creature whose tail has just dropped off while he is staring at a far-off divine event. This particular compromise between contempt and hope was an accident of Tennyson's time, and, like his liberal conservatism, will probably never be found again. His weakness was not being old-fashioned or new-fashioned, but being fashionable. His feet were set on things transitory and untenable, compromises and compacts of silence. Yet he was so perfect a poet that I fancy he will still be able to stand, even upon such clouds.

ON PIGS AS PETS

A DREAM of my pure and aspiring boyhood has been realised in the following paragraph, which I quote exactly as it stands:

A complaint by the Epping Rural District Council against a spinster keeping a pig in her house has evoked the following reply: "I received your letter, and felt very much cut up, as I am laying in the pig's room. I have not been able to stand up or get on my legs; when I can, I will get him in his own room, that was built for him. As to getting him off the premises, I shall do no such thing, as he is no nuisance to any one. We have had to be in the pig's room now for three years. I am not going to get rid of my pet. We must all live together. I will move him as soon as God gives me strength to do so."

The Rev. T. C. Spurgin observed: "The lady will require a good deal of strength to move her pet, which weighs forty stone."

It appears to me that the Rev. T. C. Spurgin ought, as a matter of chivalry, to assist the lady to move the pig, if it is indeed too heavy for her strength; no gentleman should permit a lady, who is already very much cut up, to lift forty stone of still animated and recalcitrant pork; he should himself escort the animal downstairs. It is an unusual situation, I admit. In the normal life of humanity the gentleman gives his arm to the lady and not to the pig; and

it is the pig who is very much cut up. But the situation seems to be exceptional in every way. It is all very well for the lady to say that the pig is no nuisance to any one: as it seems that she has established herself in the pig's private suite of apartments, the question rather is whether she is a nuisance to the pig. But indeed I do not think that this poor woman's fad is an inch more fantastic than many such oddities indulged in by rich and reputable people; and, as I say, I have from my boyhood entertained the dream. I never could imagine why pigs should not be kept as pets. To begin with, pigs are very beautiful animals. Those who think otherwise are those who do not look at anything with their own eyes, but only through other people's eyeglasses. The actual lines of a pig (I mean of a really fat pig) are among the loveliest and most luxuriant in nature; the pig has the same great curves, swift and yet heavy, which we see in rushing water or in rolling cloud. Compared to him, the horse, for instance, is a bony, angular, and abrupt animal. I remember that Mr. H. G. Wells, in arguing for the relativity of things (a subject over which even the Greek philosophers went to sleep until Christianity woke them up), pointed out that, while a horse is commonly beautiful if seen in profile, he is excessively ugly if seen from the top of a dogcart, having a long, lean neck, and a body like a fiddle. Now, there is no point of view from which a really corpulent pig is not full of sumptuous and satisfying curves. You can look down on a pig from the top of the most unnaturally lofty dogcart; you can (if not pressed for time) allow the pig to draw the dogcart; and I suppose a dogcart has as much to do with pigs as it has with dogs. You can examine

the pig from the top of an omnibus, from the top of the Monument, from a balloon, or an airship; and as long as he is visible he will be beautiful. In short, he has that fuller, subtler, and more universal kind of shapeliness which the unthinking (gazing at pigs and distinguished journalists) mistake for a mere absence of shape. For fatness itself is a valuable quality. While it creates admiration in the onlookers, it creates modesty in the possessor. If there is anything on which I differ from the monastic institutions of the past, it is that they sometimes sought to achieve humility by means of emaciation. It may be that the thin monks were holy, but I am sure it was the fat monks who were humble. Falstaff said that to be fat is not to be hated; but it certainly is to be laughed at, and that is a more wholesome experience for the soul of man.

I do not urge that it is effective upon the soul of a pig, who, indeed, seems somewhat indifferent to public opinion on this point. Nor do I mean that mere fatness is the only beauty of the pig. The beauty of the best pigs lies in a certain sleepy perfection of contour which links them especially to the smooth strength of our south English land in which they live. There are two other things in which one can see this perfect and piggish quality: one is in the silent and smooth swell of the Sussex downs so enormous and yet so innocent. The other is in the sleek, strong limbs of those beech trees that grow so thick in their valleys. These three holy symbols the pig, the beech tree, and the chalk down, stand for ever as expressing the one thing that England as England has to say—that power is not inconsistent with kindness. Tears of regret come into my eyes when I remember that three lions or leopards, or

whatever they are, sprawl in a fantastic, foreign way across the arms of England. We ought to have three pigs passant, gardant, or on gules. It breaks my heart to think that four commonplace lions are couched around the base of the Nelson Column. There ought to be four colossal Hampshire hogs to keep watch over so national a spot. Perhaps some of our sculptors will attack the conception; perhaps the lady's pig, which weighs forty stone and seems to be something of a domestic problem, might begin to earn its living as an artist's model.

Again, we do not know what fascinating variations might happen in the pig if once the pig were a pet. The dog has been domesticated—that is, destroyed. Nobody now in London can form the faintest idea of what a dog would look like. You know a Dachshund in the street; you know a St. Bernard in the street. But if you saw a Dog in the street you would run from him screaming. For hundreds, if not thousands of years, no one has looked at the horrible hairy original thing called Dog. Why, then, should we be hopeless about the substantial and satisfying thing called Pig? Types of Pig may also be differentiated; delicate shades of Pig may also be produced. A monstrous pig as big as a pony may perambulate the streets like a St. Bernard without attracting attention. An elegant and unnaturally attenuated pig may have all the appearance of a greyhound. There may be little, frisky, fighting pigs like Irish or Scotch terriers; there may be little pathetic pigs like King Charles spaniels. Artificial breeding might reproduce the awful original pig, tusks and all, the terror of the forests—something bigger, more mysterious, and more bloody than the bloodhound.

Those interested in hairdressing might amuse themselves by arranging the bristles like those of a poodle. Those fascinated by the Celtic mystery of the Western Highlands might see if they could train the bristles to be a veil or curtain for the eye, like those of a Skye terrier; that sensitive and invisible Celtic spirit. With elaborate training one might have a sheep-pig instead of a sheep-dog, a lap-pig instead of a lap-dog.

What is it that makes you look so incredulous? Why do you still feel slightly superior to the poor lady who would not be parted from her pig? Why do you not at once take the hog to your heart? Reason suggests his evident beauty. Evolution suggests his probable improvement. Is it, perhaps, some instinct, some tradition . . .? Well, apply that to women, children, animals, and we will argue again.

THE DUTY OF THE HISTORIAN

WE most of us suffer much from having learnt all our lessons in history from those little abridged history-books in use in most public and private schools. These lessons are insufficient—especially when you don't learn them. The latter was indeed my own case ; and the little history I know I have picked up since by rambling about in authentic books and countrysides. But the bald summaries of the small history-books still master and, in many cases, mislead us. The root of the difficulty is this: that there are two quite distinct purposes of history—the superior purpose, which is its use for children, and the secondary or inferior purpose, which is its use for historians. The highest and noblest thing that history can be is a good story. Then it appeals to the heroic heart of all generations, the eternal infancy of mankind. Such a story as that of William Tell could literally be told of any epoch; no barbarian implements could be too rude, no scientific instruments could be too elaborate for the pride and terror of the tale. It might be told of the first flint-headed arrow or the last model machine gun; the point of it is the same: it is as eternal as tyranny and fatherhood. Now, whenever there is this function of the fine history in story we tell it to children only because it is a fine story. David and the cup of water, Regulus and the *atque sciebat*, Jeanne d'Arc kissing the cross of spear-wood, or Nelson shot with all his stars—these stir in every child the ancient heart of his race; and that is all

that they need do. Changes of costume and local colour are nothing: it did not matter that in the illustrated Bibles of our youth David was dressed rather like Regulus, in a Roman cuirass and sandals, any more than it mattered that in the illuminated Bibles of the Middle Ages he was dressed rather like Jeanne d'Arc, in a hood or a visored helmet. It will not matter to future ages if the pictures represent Jeanne d'Arc cremated in an asbestos stove or Nelson dying in a top-hat. For the childish and eternal use of history, the history will still be heroic.

But the historians have quite a different business. It is their affair, not merely to remember that humanity has been wise and great, but to understand the special ways in which it has been weak and foolish. Historians have to explain the horrible mystery of how fashions were ever fashionable. They have to analyse that statuesque instinct of the South that moulds the Roman cuirass to the muscles of the human torso, or that element of symbolic extravagance in the later Middle Ages which let loose a menageric upon breast and casque and shield. They have to explain, as best they can, how any one ever came to have a top-hat, how any one ever endured an asbestos stove.

Now the mere tales of the heroes are a part of religious education; they are meant to teach us that we have souls. But the inquiries of the historians into the eccentricities of every epoch are merely a part of political education; they are meant to teach us to avoid certain perils or solve certain problems in the complexity of practical affairs. It is the first duty of a boy to admire the glory of Trafalgar. It is the first duty of a grown man to question its utility. It is one question whether it was a good

THE DUTY OF THE HISTORIAN

thing as an episode in the struggle between Pitt and the French Revolution. It is quite another matter that it was certainly a good thing in that immortal struggle between the son of man and all the unclean spirits of sloth and cowardice and despair. For the wisdom of man alters with every age; his prudence has to fit perpetually shifting shapes of inconvenience or dilemma. But his folly is immortal: a fire stolen from heaven.

Now, the little histories that we learnt as children were partly meant simply as inspiring stories. They largely consisted of tales like Alfred and the cakes or Eleanor and the poisoned wound. They ought to have entirely consisted of them. Little children ought to learn nothing but legends; they are the beginnings of all sound morals and manners. I would not be severe on the point: I would not exclude a story solely because it was true. But the essential on which I should insist would be, not that the tale must be true, but that the tale must be fine.

The attempts in the little school-histories to introduce older and subtler elements, to talk of the atmosphere of Puritanism or the evolution of our Constitution, is quite irrelevant and vain. It is impossible to convey to a barely breeched imp who does not yet know his own community, the exquisite divergence between it and some other community. What is the good of talking about the Constitution carefully balanced on three estates to a creature only quite recently balanced on two legs? What is the sense of explaining the Puritan shade of morality to a creature who is still learning with difficulty that there is any morality at all? We may put on one side the possibility that some of us

may think the Puritan atmosphere an unpleasant one or the Constitution a trifle rickety on its three legs. The general truth remains that we should teach, to the young, men's enduring truths, and let the learned amuse themselves with their passing errors.

It is often said nowadays that in great crises and moral revolutions we need one strong man to decide; but it seems to me that that is exactly when we do not need him. We do not need a great man for a revolution, for a true revolution is a time when all men are great. Where despotism really is successful is in very small matters. Every one must have noticed how essential a despot is to arranging the things in which every one is doubtful, because every one is indifferent: the boats in a water picnic or the seats at a dinner-party. Here the man who knows his own mind is really wanted, for no one else ever thinks his own mind worth knowing. No one knows where to go to precisely, because no one cares where he goes. It is for trivialities that the great tyrant is meant.

But when the depths are stirred in a society, and all men's souls grow taller in a transfiguring anger or desire, then I am by no means so certain that the great man has been a benefit even when he has appeared. I am sure that Cromwell and Napoleon managed the mere pikes and bayonets, boots and knapsacks better than most other people could have managed them. But I am by no means sure that Napoleon gave a better turn to the whole French Revolution. I am by no means so sure that Cromwell has really improved the religion of England.

As it is in politics with the specially potent man, so it is in history with the specially learned. We do

THE DUTY OF THE HISTORIAN

not need the learned man to teach us the important things. We all know the important things, though we all violate and neglect them. Gigantic industry, abysmal knowledge, are needed for the discovery of the tiny things—the things that seem hardly worth the trouble. Generally speaking, the ordinary man should be content with the terrible secret that men are men—which is another way of saying that they are brothers. He had better think of Cæsar as a man and not as a Roman, for he will probably think of a Roman as a statue and not as a man. He had better think of Cœur-de-Lion as a man and not as a Crusader, or he will think of him as a stage Crusader. For every man knows the inmost core of every other man. It is the trappings and externals erected for an age and a fashion that are forgotten and unknown. It is all the curtains that are curtailed, all the masks that are masked, all the disguises that are now disguised in dust and featureless decay. But though we cannot reach the outside of history, we all start from the inside. Some day, if I ransack whole libraries, I may know the outermost aspects of King Stephen, and almost see him in his habit as he lived; but the inmost I know already. The symbols are mouldered and the manner of the oath forgotten; the secret society may even be dissolved; but we all know the secret.

THE FEAR OF THE FILM

LONG lists are being given of particular cases in which children have suffered in spirits or health from alleged horrors of the kinema. One child is said to have had a fit after seeing a film; another to have been sleepless with some fixed idea taken from a film; another to have killed his father with a carving-knife through having seen a knife used in a film. This may possibly have occurred; though if it did, anybody of common sense would prefer to have details about that particular child, rather than about that particular picture. But what is supposed to be the practical moral of it, in any case? Is it that the young should never see a story with a knife in it? Are they to be brought up in complete ignorance of "The Merchant of Venice" because Shylock flourishes a knife for a highly disagreeable purpose? Are they never to hear of Macbeth, lest it should slowly dawn upon their trembling intelligence that it is a dagger that they see before them? It would be more practical to propose that a child should never see a real carving-knife, and still more practical that he should never see a real father. All that may come; the era of preventive and prophetic science has only begun. We must not be impatient. But when we come to the cases of morbid panic after some particular exhibition, there is yet more reason to clear the mind of cant. It is perfectly true that a child will have the horrors after seeing some particular detail. It is quite equally true that nobody can possibly

predict what that detail will be. It certainly need not be anything so obvious as a murder or even a knife. I should have thought anybody who knew anything about children, or for that matter anybody who had been a child, would know that these nightmares are quite incalculable. The hint of horror may come by any chance in any connection. If the kinema exhibited nothing but views of country vicarages or vegetarian restaurants, the ugly fancy is as likely to be stimulated by these things as by anything else. It is like seeing a face in the carpet; it makes no difference that it is the carpet at the vicarage.

I will give two examples from my own most personal circle; I could give hundreds from hearsay. I know a child who screamed steadily for hours if he had been taken past the Albert Memorial. This was not a precocious precision or excellence in his taste in architecture. Nor was it a premature protest against all that gimcrack German culture which nearly entangled us in the downfall of the barbaric tyranny. It was the fear of something which he himself described with lurid simplicity as *The Cow with the Indiarubber Tongue*. It sounds rather a good title for a creepy short story. At the base of the Albert Memorial (I may explain for those who have never enjoyed that monument) are four groups of statuary representing Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. America especially is very overwhelming; borne onward on a snorting bison who plunges forward in a fury of western progress, and is surrounded with Red Indians, Mexicans, and all sorts of pioneers, O pioneers, armed to the teeth. The child passed this transatlantic tornado with complete coolness and indifference. Europe, however, is

seated on a bull so mild as to look like a cow; the tip of its tongue is showing and happened to be discoloured by weather; suggesting, I suppose, a living thing coming out of the dead marble. Now nobody could possibly foretell that a weather-stain would occur in that particular place, and fill that particular child with that particular fancy. Nobody is likely to propose meeting it by forbidding graven images, like the Moslems and the Jews. Nobody has said (as yet) that it is bad morals to make a picture of a cow. Nobody has even pleaded that it is bad manners for a cow to put its tongue out. These things are utterly beyond calculation; they are also beyond counting, for they occur all over the place, not only to morbid children but to any children. I knew this particular child very well, being a rather older child myself at the time. He certainly was not congenitally timid or feeble-minded; for he risked going to prison to expose the Marconi Scandal and died fighting in the Great War.

Here is another example out of scores. A little girl, now a very normal and cheerful young lady, had an insomnia of insane terror entirely arising from the lyric of "Little Bo-Peep." After an inquisition like that of the confessor or the psychoanalyst, it was found that the word "bleating" had some obscure connection in her mind with the word "bleeding." There was thus perhaps an added horror in the phrase "heard"; in hearing rather than seeing the flowing of blood. Nobody could possibly provide against that sort of mistake. Nobody could prevent the little girl from hearing about sheep, any more than the little boy from hearing about cows. We might abolish all nursery rhymes; and as they are happy and popular and

used with universal success, it is very likely that we shall. But the whole point of the mistake about that phrase is that it might have been a mistake about any phrase. We cannot foresee all the fancies that might arise, not only out of what we say, but of what we do not say. We cannot avoid promising a child a caramel lest he should think we say cannibal or conceal the very word "hill" lest it should sound like "hell."

All the catalogues and calculations offered us by the party of caution in this controversy are therefore quite worthless. It is perfectly true that examples can be given of a child being frightened of this, that or the other. But we can never be certain of his being frightened of the same thing twice. It is not on the negative side, by making lists of vetoes, that the danger can be avoided; it can never indeed be entirely avoided. We can only fortify the child on the positive side by giving him health and humour and a trust in God; not omitting (what will much mystify the moderns) an intelligent appreciation of the idea of authority, which is only the other side of confidence, and which alone can suddenly and summarily cast out such devils. But we may be sure that most modern people will not look at it in this way. They will think it more scientific to attempt to calculate the incalculable. So soon as they have realized that it is not so simple as it looks, they will try to map it out, however complicated it may be. When they discover that the terrible detail need not be a knife, but might just as well be a fork, they will only say there is a fork complex as well as a knife complex. And that increasing complexity of complexes is the net in which liberty will be taken.

Instead of seeing in the odd cases of the cow's tongue or the bleating sheep the peril of their past generalizations, they will see them only as starting points for new generalizations. They will get yet another theory out of it. And they will begin acting on the theory long before they have done thinking about it. They will start out with some new and crude conception that sculpture has made children scream or that nursery rhymes have made children sleepless; and the thing will be a clause in a programme of reform before it has begun to be a conclusion in a serious study of psychology. That is the practical problem about modern liberty which the critics will not see; of which eugenics is one example and all this amateur child-psychology is another. So long as an old morality was in black and white like a chess-board, even a man who wanted more of it made white was certain that no more of it would be made black. Now he is never certain what vices may not be released, but neither is he certain what virtues may be forbidden. Even if he did not think it wrong to run away with a married woman, he knew that his neighbours only thought it wrong because the woman was married. They did not think it wrong to run away with a red-haired woman, or a left-handed woman, or a woman subject to headaches. But when we let loose a thousand eugenical speculations, all adopted before they are verified and acted on even before they are adopted, he is just as likely as not to find himself separated from the woman for those or any other reasons. Similarly there was something to be said for restrictions, even rather puritanical and provincial restrictions, upon what children should read or see, so long as they fenced in certain fixed departments

like sex or sensational tortures. But when we begin to speculate on whether other sensations may not stimulate as dangerously as sex, those other sensations may be as closely controlled as sex. When, let us say, we hear that the eye and brain are weakened by the rapid turning of wheels as well as by the most revolting torturing of men, we have come into a world in which cart-wheels and steam-engines may become as obscene as racks and thumb-screws. In short, so long as we *combine* ceaseless and often reckless scientific speculation with rapid and often random social reform, the result must inevitably be not anarchy but ever-increasing tyranny. There must be a ceaseless and almost mechanical multiplication of things forbidden. The resolution to cure all the ills that flesh is heir to, combined with the guesswork about all possible ills that flesh and nerve and brain-cell may be heir to—these two things conducted simultaneously must inevitably spread a sort of panic of prohibition. Scientific imagination and social reform between them will quite logically and almost legitimately have made us slaves. This seems to me a very clear, a very fair and a very simple point of public criticism; and I am much mystified about why so many publicists cannot even see what it is, but take refuge in charges of anarchism which firstly are not true, and secondly have nothing to do with it.

WINGS AND THE HOUSEMAID

AMONG the numberless fictitious things that I have fortunately never written, there was a little story about a logical maiden lady engaging apartments in which she was not allowed to keep a cat or a dog, who, nevertheless, stipulated for permission to keep a bird, and who eventually walked round to her new lodgings accompanied by an ostrich. There was a moral to the fable, connected with that exaggeration of small concessions, in which, for instance, the Germans indulged about espionage, or the Jews about interest. But this faded fancy returned to my mind in another fashion when a very humane lady suggested the other day that every domestic servant, including the butler, I presume, should be described as "a home-bird." Unless the lady is mis-reported, which is likely enough, she wanted servants called home-birds, because they keep the home-fires burning, which, as many will be ready to point out, is hardly the particular form in which the domesticity of the nest commonly expresses itself. But I am not at all disposed to deride the lady's real meaning, still less her real motives, which referred to a real movement of social conscience and sentiment, however wrongly expressed. She was troubled about the implied insolence of calling servants servants and apparently even of talking about "maids" or "the cook." Therefore she evolved the ornithological substitute; about which, of course, it would be easy to evolve a whole aviary of allegorical parodies.

WINGS AND THE HOUSEMAID

It would be easy to ask whether a private secretary is to be called a secretary-bird, or, perhaps, the telephone-girl a humming-bird. But it will be enough to say generally of the proposal, in its present verbal form, that one has only to submit it to any living and human housemaid in order to find that particular home-bird developing rapidly into a mocking-bird. Nevertheless, as I have said, we should not merely dismiss any social doubts thus suggested, or any impulse towards a warmer respect for work generally grossly undervalued. Too many people, of the more snobbish social strata, have treated their servants as home-birds; as owls, for instance, who can be up all night, or as vultures, who can eat the refuse fit for the dustbin. I would not throw cold water on any indignation on this score; but I note it as typical of the time that the indignation should fail on the side of intelligence. For it is the mark of our time, above almost everything else, that it goes by associations and not by arguments; that is why it has a hundred arts and no philosophy.

Thus, for instance, the lady in question lumps together a number of terms that have no logical connection at all. There is at least a meaning in objecting to one person calling another a servant. As I shall suggest in a moment, there is not much sense in changing the name when you do not change the thing; and there is a great deal of nonsense in denying the status of the servant at the moment when you are making it more servile. Still, anybody can see how the term might be held to hurt human dignity; but the other terms mentioned cannot hurt human dignity at all. I cannot conceive why it should insult a cook to call her a cook,

any more than it insults a cashier to call him a cashier; to say nothing of the fact that dealing with cookery is far nobler than dealing with cash. And the third title certainly tells entirely the other way. The word "maid" is not only a noble old English word, with no note of social distinction; for a mediæval king might have praised his daughter as "a good maid." It is a word loaded with magnificent memories, in history, literature, and religion. Joan the Maid suggests a little more than Joan the maid-servant. As it says in Mr. Belloc's stirring little poem:—

By God who made the Master Maids,
I know not whence she came;
But the sword she bore to save the soul
Went up like an altar flame.

It is needless here to trace the idea back to its splendid sources; or to explain how the word maid has been the highest earthly title, not only on earth but in heaven. "Mother and maiden was never none but she." Here at least modern humanitarian criticism has gone curiously astray, even for its own purposes; any servant may well be satisfied with the dignity of being called the maid, just as any workman may be rightly honoured by the accident which calls him the man. For in a modern industrial dispute, as reported in the papers, I always feel there is a final verdict and sentence in the very statement of the case of Masters *versus* Men.

The true objection lies much farther back. It begins with the simple fact that the home-bird is not in her own home. When that particular sparrow stokes the fire as above described, it is not her own fireside; when we happen to meet a canary carrying

a coalscuttle, the canary is not generally a coal-owner. In short, wherever we find pelicans, penguins or flamingoes keeping the home-fires burning, they may all be earnestly wishing that they could fly away to their homes. Now a moderate amount of this temporary and vicarious domesticity is a natural enough accident in social relations, so long as it does not obscure and obstruct more individual and direct domesticity. In short, there is no particular harm in the maid being a housemaid in someone else's house, if she normally has a chance of being a housewife in her own. As I shall suggest in a moment, this is what was really implied in certain older institutions to which the wisest are now looking back. But in any case it is odd that the home-bird should thus plume itself at this moment; for the trend of the time is certainly not towards any domesticity, direct or indirect. The birds have long been netted or caged, by cold, fear and hunger, into larger and more terrorist systems. The happy home-birds are keeping the factory fires burning. The only legal and industrial tendency seems to be to shut up more and more of the women, those strange wild fowl, in those colossal cages of iron. Nor is the change one of mere æsthetic atmosphere; we know now that it is one of economic fact and may soon be one of legal definition. In a word it is queer that we should suddenly grow sensitive about calling people servants when we are in the act of making them slaves. Indeed, in many concrete cases we may already be said to be making them convicts. The true moral meaning of much that is called the improvement of prisons is not that we are turning prisoners into a better sort of people but rather that we are treating a better sort of

people as prisoners. The broad arrow is broadened in so liberal a fashion as to cover those who would once have been counted respectable; and there is a sense in which the broad arrow, becoming broader, is bound to become blunter. The prison becomes utilitarian as well as disciplinary, as the factory becomes disciplinary as well as utilitarian. The two become simply and substantially the same; for they have to treat the same sort of impecunious people in the same sort of impersonal way. People may differ about the definition of that common condition or status. Some may eagerly salute persons involved as home-birds. Others may prefer to describe them as jail-birds.

For the rest, if anybody wants to strike the central stream of moderate sanity in the servant problem, I recommend him first to read with a close attention or preferably to sing in a loud voice, the song called "Sally in Our Alley." If that great and gloriously English lyric, the poet does not disguise the accidental discomforts of the great system of apprenticeship which was part of the glory of the Guilds. He even exhibits his Christian prejudices by comparing his master to a Turk. He actually entertains, as every reflective social reformer must, the hypothetical alternative of the Servile State, and considers the relative advantages of a slave that rows a galley. But the point is that what makes him refuse and endure is hope, the sure and certain hope of a glorious emancipation; not the hopeless hope of a chance in a scramble, with a general recommendation to get on or get out, but a charter of knowledge and honour, that "when his seven long years are past," a door shall open to him, which our age has shut on the great multitude of mankind.

THE SLAVERY OF FREE VERSE

THE truth most needed to-day is that the end is never the right end. The beginning is the right end at which to begin. The modern man has to read everything backwards; as when he reads journalism first and history afterwards—if at all. He is like a blind man exploring an elephant, and condemned to begin at the very tip of its tail. But he is still more unlucky; for when he has a first principle, it is generally the very last principle that he ought have. He starts, as it were, with one infallible dogma about the elephant; that its tail is its trunk. He works the wrong way round on principle; and tries to fit all the practical facts to his principle. Because the elephant has no eyes in its tail-end, he calls it a blind elephant; and expatiates on its ignorance, superstition, and need of compulsory education. Because it has no tusks at its tail-end, he says that tusks are a fantastic flourish attributed to a fabulous creature, an ivory chimera that must have come through the ivory gate. Because it does not as a rule pick up things with its tail, he dismisses the magical story that it can pick up things with its trunk. He probably says it is plainly a piece of anthropomorphism to suppose that an elephant can pack its trunk. The result is that he becomes as pallid and worried as a pessimist; the world to him is not only an elephant, but a white elephant. He does not know what to do with it, and cannot be persuaded of the perfectly simple explanation; which is that he has not made the

smallest real attempt to make head or tail of the animal. He will not begin at the right end; because he happens to have come first on the wrong end.

But in nothing do I feel this modern trick, of trusting to a fag-end rather than a first principle, more than in the modern treatment of poetry. With this or that particular metrical form, or unmetrical form, or unmetrical formlessness, I might be content or not, as it achieved some particular effect or not. But the whole general tendency regarded as an emancipation, seems to me more or less of an enslavement. It seems founded on one subconscious idea; that talk is freer than verse; and that verse, therefore, should claim the freedom of talk. But talk, especially in our time, is not free at all. It is tripped up by trivialities, tamed by conventions, loaded with dead words, thwarted by a thousand meaningless things. It does not liberate the soul so much, when a man can say, "You always look so nice," as when he can say, "But your eternal summer shall not fade." The first is an awkward and constrained sentence ending with the weakest word ever used, or rather misused, by man. The second is like the gesture of a giant or the sweeping flight of an archangel: it has the very rush of liberty. I do not despise the man who says the first, because he *means* the second; and what he means is more important than what he says. I have always done my best to emphasize the inner dignity of these daily things, in spite of their dull externals; but I do not think it an improvement that the inner spirit itself should grow more external and more dull. It is thought right to discourage numbers of prosaic people trying to be poetical; but I think it much more of a bore to watch numbers of poetical

people trying to be prosaic. In short, it is another case of tail-foremost philosophy; instead of watering the laurel hedge of the cockney villa, we bribe the cockney to brick in the plant of Apollo.

I have always had the fancy that if a man were really free, he would talk in rhythm and even in rhyme. His most hurried post-card would be a sonnet; and his most hasty wires like harp-strings. He would breathe a song into the telephone; a song which would be a lyric or an epic, according to the time involved in awaiting the call; or in his inevitable altercation with the telephone girl, the duel would also be a duet. He would express his preference among the dishes at dinner in short impromptu poems, combining the more mystical gratitude of grace with a certain epigrammatic terseness, more convenient for domestic good feeling. If Mr. Yeats can say, in exquisite verse, the exact number of bean rows he would like on his plantation, why not the number of beans he would like on his plate? If he can issue a rhymed request to procure the honey-bee, why not to pass the honey? Misunderstandings might arise at first with the richer and more fantastic poets; and Francis Thompson might have asked several times for "the gold skins of undelirious wine" before anybody understood that he wanted the grapes. Nevertheless, I will maintain that his magnificent phrase would be a far more real expression of God's most glorious gift of the vine, than if he had simply said in a peremptory manner "grapes"; especially if the culture of compulsory education had carefully taught him to pronounce it as if it were "gripes." And if a man could ask for a potato in the form of a poem, the poem would not be merely

a more romantic but a much more realistic rendering of a potato. For a potato is a poem; it is even an ascending scale of poems; beginning at the root, in subterranean grotesques in the Gothic manner, with humps like the deformatories of a goblin and eyes like a beast of Revelation, and rising up through the green shades of the earth to a crown that has the shape of stars and the hue of heaven.

But the truth behind all this is that expressed in that very ancient mystical notion, the music of the spheres. It is the idea that, at the back of everything, existence begins with a harmony and not a chaos; and, therefore, when we really spread our wings and find a wider freedom, we find it in something more continuous and recurrent, and not in something more fragmentary and crude. Freedom is fullness, especially fullness of life; and a full vessel is more rounded and complete than an empty one, and not less so. To vary Browning's phrase, we find in prose the broken arcs, in poetry the perfect round. Prose is not the freedom of poetry; rather prose is the fragments of poetry. Prose, at least, in the prosaic sense, is poetry interrupted, held up and cut off from its course; the chariot of Phœbus stopped by a block in the Strand. But when it begins to move again at all, I think we shall find certain old-fashioned things move with it, such as repetition and even measure, rhythm and even rhyme. We shall discover with horror that the wheels of the chariot go round and round; and even that the horses of the chariot have the usual number of feet.

Anyway, the right way to encourage the cortège is not to put the cart before the horse. It is not to make poetry more poetical by ignoring what

distinguishes it from prose. There may be many new ways of making the chariot move again; but I confess that most of the modern theorists seem to me to be lecturing on a new theory of its mechanics, while it is standing still. If a wizard before my very eyes works a miracle with a rope, a boy and a mango plant, I am only theoretically interested in the question of a sceptic, who asks why it should not be done with a garden hose, a maiden aunt and a monkey-tree. Why not, indeed, if he can do it? If a saint performs a miracle to-morrow, by turning a stone into a fish, I shall be the less concerned at being asked, in the abstract, why a man should not also turn a camp-stool into a cockatoo; but let him do it, and not merely explain how it can be done. It is certain that words such as "birds" and "bare," which are as plain as "fish" or "stone," can be combined in such a miracle as "Bare ruined quires where late the sweet birds sang." So far as I can follow my own feelings, the metre and fall of the feet, even the rhyme and place of the sonnet, have a great deal to do with producing such an effect. I do not say there is no other way of producing such an effect. I only ask, not without longing, where else in this wide and weary time is it produced? I know I cannot produce it; and I do not in fact feel it when I hear *vers libres*. I know not where is that Promethean heat; and even to express my ignorance, I am glad to find better words than my own.

FALSE THEORY AND THE THEATRE

A THEATRICAL manager recently insisted on introducing Chinese labour into the theatrical profession. He insisted on having real Chinamen to take the part of Chinese servants; and some actors seem to have resented it—as I think, very reasonably. A distinguished actress, who is clever enough to know better, defended it on the ground that nothing must interfere with the perfection of a work of art. I dispute the moral thesis in any case; and Nero would no doubt have urged it in defence of having real deaths in the amphitheatre. I do not admit in any case that the artist can be entirely indifferent to hunger and unemployment, any more than to lions or boiling oil. But, as a matter of fact, there is no need to raise the moral question, because the case is equally strong in relation to the artistic question. I do not think that a Chinese character being represented by a Chinese actor is the finishing touch to the perfection of a work of art. I think it is the last and lowest phase of the vulgarity that is called realism. It is in the same style and taste as the triumphs on which, I believe, some actor-managers have prided themselves; the triumphs of having real silver for goblets or real jewels for crowns. That is not the spirit of a perfect artist, but rather of a purse-proud parvenu. The perfect artist would be he who could put on a crown of gilt wire or tinsel and make us feel he was a king.

Moreover if the principle is to be extended from properties to persons, it is not easy to see where the



Will it be necessary to kidnap an African gentleman
and force him into acting Othello?

principle can stop. If we are to insist on real Asiatics to act "Chu Chin Chow," why not insist on real Venetians to act "The Merchant of Venice?" We did experiment recently, and I believe very successfully, in having the Jew acted by a real Jew. But I hardly think we should like to make it a rule that nobody must be allowed to act Shylock unless he can prove his racial right to call upon his father Abraham. Must the characters of Macbeth and Macduff only be represented by men with names like Macpherson and Macnab? Must the Prince of Denmark be native there and to the manner born? Must we import a crowd of Greeks before we are allowed to act "Troilus and Cressida," or a mob of real Egyptians to form the background of "Anthony and Cleopatra?" Will it be necessary to kidnap an African gentleman out of Africa, by the methods of the slave trade, and force him into acting Othello? It was rather foolishly suggested at one time that our allies in Japan might be offended at the fantastic satire of "The Mikado." As a matter of fact, the satire of "The Mikado" is not at all directed against Japanese things, but exclusively against English things. But I certainly think there might be some little ill-feeling in Japan if gangs of Japanese coolies were shipped across two continents merely in order to act in it. If once this singular rule be recognised, a dramatist will certainly be rather shy of introducing Zulus or Red Indians into his dramas, owing to the difficulty in securing appropriate dramatic talent. He will hesitate before making his hero an Eskimo. He will abandon his intention of seeking his heroine in the Sandwich Islands. If he were to insist on introducing real cannibals, it seems possible that they might insist on introducing real cannibalism.

This would be quite in the spirit of Nero and all the art critics of the Roman realism of the amphitheatre. But surely it would be putting almost too perfect a finishing touch to the perfection of a work of art. That kind of finishing touch is a little too finishing.

The irony grew more intense when the newspapers that had insisted on Chinamen because they could not help being Chinamen began to praise them with admiration and astonishment because they looked Chinese. This opens up a speculation so complex and contradictory that I do not propose to follow it, for I am interested here not in the particular incident but in the general idea. It will be a sufficient statement of the fundamental fact of all the arts if I say simply that I do not believe in the resemblance. I do not believe that a chinaman does look like a Chinaman. That is, I do not believe that any Chinaman will necessarily look like *the* Chinaman—the Chinaman in the imagination of the artist and the interest of the crowd. We all know the fable of the man who imitated a pig, and his rival who was hooted*by the crowd because he could only produce what was (in fact) the squeak of a real pig. The crowd was perfectly right. The crowd was a crowd of very penetrating and philosophical art critics. They had come there not to hear an ordinary pig, which they could hear by poking in any ordinary pigsty. They had come to hear how the voice of the pig affects the immortal mind and spirit of man; what sort of satire he would make of it; what sort of fun he can get out of it; what sort of exaggeration he feels to be an exaggeration of its essence, and not of its accidents. In other words, they had come to hear a squeak, but the sort of squeak which

expresses what a man thinks of a pig—not the vastly inferior squeak which only expresses what a pig thinks of a man. I have myself a poetical enthusiasm for pigs, and the paradise of my fancy is one where pigs have wings. But it is only men, especially wise men, who discuss whether pigs can fly; we have no particular proof that pigs ever discuss it. Therefore the actor who imitated the quadruped may well have put into his squeak something of the pathetic cry of one longing for the wings of the dove. The quadruped himself might express no such sentiment; he might appear, and generally does appear, singularly unconscious of his own lack of feathers. But the same principle is true of things more dignified than the most dignified porker, though clad in the most superb plumage. If a vision of a stately Arab has risen in the imagination of an author who is an artist, he will be wise if he confides it to an actor who is also an artist. He will be much wiser to confide it to an actor than to an Arab. The actor, being a fellow-countryman and a fellow-artist, may bring out what the author thinks the Arab stands for; whereas the real Arab might be a particular individual who at that particular moment refused to stand for anything of the sort, or for anything at all. The principle is a general one; and I mean no disrespect to China in the porcine parallel, or in the figurative association of pigs and pigtails.

But as a matter of fact, the argument is especially apt in the case of China. For I fear that China is chiefly interesting to most of us as the other end of the world. It is valued as something far-off, and therefore fantastical, like a kingdom in the clouds of sunrise. It is not the very real virtues of the Chinese

tradition—its stoicism, its sense of honour, its ancient peasant cults—that most people want to put into a play. It is the ordinary romantic feeling about something remote and extravagant, like the Martians or the Man in the Moon. It is perfectly reasonable to have that romantic feeling in moderation, like other amusements. But it is not reasonable to expect the remote person to feel remote from himself, or the man at the other end of the world not to feel it as this end. We must not ask the outlandish Oriental to feel outlandish, or a Chinaman to be astonished at being Chinese. If, therefore, the literary artist has the legitimate literary purpose of expressing the mysterious and alien atmosphere which China implies to him, he will probably do it much better with the aid of an actor who is not Chinese. Of course, I am not criticizing the particular details of the particular performance, of which I know little or nothing. I do not know the circumstances; and under the circumstances, for all I know, the experiment may have been very necessary or very successful. I merely protest against a theory of dramatic truth urged in defence of the dramatic experiment, which seems to me calculated to falsify the whole art of the drama. It is founded on exactly the same fallacy as that of the infant in Stevenson's nursery rhyme, who thought that the Japanese children must suffer from home-sickness through being always abroad in Japan.

This brings us very near to an old and threadbare theatrical controversy, about whether staging should be simple or elaborate. I do not mean to begin that argument all over again. What is really wanted is not so much the simple stage-manager as the simple spectator. In a very real

sense, what is wanted is the simple critic, who would be in truth the most subtle critic. The healthy human instincts in these things are at least as much spoiled by sophistication in the stalls as by elaboration on the stage. A really simple mind would enjoy a simple scene—and also a gorgeous scene. A popular instinct, to be found in all folklore, would know well enough when the one or the other was appropriate. But what is involved here is not the whole of that sophistication, but only one particular sophistry, and against that sophistry we may well pause to protest. It is the critical fallacy of cutting off a real donkey's head to put it on Bottom the Weaver; when the head is symbolical, and in that case more appropriate to the critic than to the actor.

THE SENTIMENTALISM OF DIVORCE

DIVORCE is a thing which the newspapers now not only advertise, but advocate, almost as if it were a pleasure in itself. It may be, indeed, that all the flowers and festivities will now be transferred from the fashionable wedding to the fashionable divorce. A superb iced and frosted divorce-cake will be provided for the feast, and in military circles will be cut with the co-respondent's sword. A dazzling display of divorce presents will be laid out for the inspection of the company, watched by a detective dressed as an ordinary divorce guest. Perhaps the old divorce breakfast will be revived; anyhow, toasts will be drunk, the guests will assemble on the doorstep to see the husband and wife go off in opposite directions; and all will go merry as a divorce-court bell. All this, though to some it might seem a little fanciful, would really be far less fantastic than the sort of things that are really said on the subject. I am not going to discuss the depth and substance of that subject. I myself hold a mystical view of marriage; but I am not going to debate it here. But merely in the interests of light and logic I would protest against the way in which it is frequently debated. The process cannot rationally be called a debate at all. It is a sort of chorus of sentimentalists in the sensational newspapers, perpetually intoning some such formula as this: "We respect marriage, we reverence marriage, holy, sacred, ineffably exquisite and ideal marriage. True marriage is love, and when love

alters, marriage alters, and when love stops or begins again, marriage does the same; wonderful, beautiful, beatific marriage."

Now, with all reasonable sympathy with everything sentimental, I may remark that all that talk is tosh. Marriage is an institution like any other, set up deliberately to have certain functions and limitations; it is an institution like private property, or conscription, or the legal liberties of the subject. To talk as if it were made or melted with certain changing moods is a mere waste of words. The object of private property is that as many citizens as possible should have a certain dignity and pleasure in being masters of material things. But suppose a dog-stealer were to say that as soon as a man was bored with his dog it ceased to be his dog, and he ceased to be responsible for it. Suppose he were to say that by merely coveting the dog, he could immediately morally possess the dog. The answer would be that the only way to make men responsible for dogs was to make the relation a legal one, apart from the likes and dislikes of the moment. Suppose a burglar were to say: "Private property I venerate, private property I revere; but I am convinced that that Mr. Brown does not truly value his silver Apostles spoons as such sacred objects should be valued; they have therefore ceased to be his property; in reality they have already become my property, for I appreciate their precious character as nobody else can do." Suppose a murderer were to say: "What can be more amiable and admirable than human life lived with a due sense of its priceless opportunity! But I regret to observe that Mr. Robinson has lately been looking decidedly tired and melancholy; life accepted in this depressing and demoralising spirit

can no longer truly be called life; it is rather my own exuberant and perhaps exaggerated joy of life which I must gratify by cutting his throat with a carving-knife."

It is obvious that these philosophers would fail to understand what we mean by a rule, quite apart from the problem of its exceptions. They would fail to grasp what we mean by an institution, whether it be the institution of law, of property, or of marriage. A reasonable person will certainly reply to the burglar: "You will hardly soothe us by merely poetical praises of property; because your case would be much more convincing if you denied, as the Communists do, that property ought to exist at all. There may be, there certainly are, gross abuses in private property; but so long as it is an institution at all, it cannot alter merely with mood and emotions. A farm cannot simply float away from a farmer, in proportion as his interest in it grows fainter than it was. A house cannot shift away by inches from a householder, by certain fine shades of feeling that he happens to have about it. A dog cannot drift away like a dream, and begin to belong to somebody else who happens just then to be dreaming of him. And neither can the serious social relation of husband and wife, of mother and father, or even of man and woman, be resolved in all its relations by passions and reactions of sentiment." This question is quite apart from the question of whether there are exceptions to the rule of loyalty, or what they are. The primary point is that there is an institution to which to be loyal. If the new sentimentalists mean what they say, when they say they venerate that institution, they must not suggest that an institution can be actually identical

SENTIMENTALISM OF DIVORCE

with an emotion. And that is what their rhetoric does suggest, so far as it can be said to suggest anything.

These writers are always explaining to us why they believe in divorce. I think I can easily understand why they believe in divorce. What I do not understand is why they believe in marriage. Just as the philosophical burglar would be more philosophical if he were a Bolshevist, so this sort of divorce advocate would be more philosophical if he were a free-lover. For his arguments never seem to touch on marriage as an institution, or anything more than an individual experience. The real explanation of this strange indifference to the institutional idea is, I fancy, something not only deeper, but wider; something affecting all the institutions of the modern world. The truth is that these sociologists are not at all interested in promoting the sort of social life that marriage does promote. The sort of society of which marriage has always been the strongest pillar is what is sometimes called the distributive society; the society in which most of the citizens have a tolerable share of property, especially property in land. Everywhere, all over the world, the farm goes with the family and the family with the farm. Unless the whole domestic group hold together with a sort of loyalty or local patriotism, unless the inheritance of property is logical and legitimate, unless the family quarrels are kept out of the courts of officialism, the tradition of family ownership cannot be handed on unimpaired. On the other hand, the Servile State, which is the opposite of the distributive state, has always been rather embarrassed by the institution of marriage. It is an old story that the negro slavery of "Uncle

'Tom's Cabin' did its worst work in the breaking-up of families. But, curiously enough, the same story is told from both sides. For the apologists of the Slave States, or, at least, of the Southern States, made the same admission even in their own defence. If they denied breaking up the slave family, it was because they denied that there was any slave family to break up.

Free love is the direct enemy of freedom. It is the most obvious of all the bribes that can be offered by slavery. In servile societies a vast amount of sexual laxity can go on in practice, and even in theory, save when now and then some cranky speculator or crazy squire has a fad for some special breed of slaves like a breed of cattle. And even that lunacy would not last long; for lunatics are the minority among slave-owners. Slavery has a much more sane and a much more subtle appeal to human nature than that. It is much more likely that, after a few such fads and freaks, the new Servile State would settle down into the sleepy resignation of the old Servile State; the old pagan repose in slavery, as it was before Christianity came to trouble and perplex the world with ideals of liberty and chivalry. One of the conveniences of that pagan world is that, below a certain level of society, nobody really need bother about pedigree or paternity at all. A new world began when slaves began to stand on their dignity as virgin martyrs. Christendom is the civilization that such martyrs made; and slavery is its returning enemy. But of all the bribes that the old pagan slavery can offer, this luxury and laxity is the strongest; nor do I deny that the influences desiring the degradation of human dignity have here chosen their instrument well.

THE PAGODA OF PROGRESS

THERE is one fashionable fallacy that crops up everywhere like a weed, until a man feels inclined to devote the rest of his life to the hopeless task of weeding it out. I take one example of it from a newspaper correspondence headed "Have Women Gone Far Enough?" It is immediately concerned with alleged impropriety in dress; but I am not directly interested in that. I quote one paragraph from a lady correspondent, not because it is any worse than the same thing as stated by countless scholars and thinkers, but rather because it is more clearly stated—

"'Women have gone far enough.' That has always been the cry of the individual with the unprogressive mind. It seems to me that until Doomsday there will always be the type of man who will cry 'Women have gone far enough'; but no one can stop the tide of evolution, and women will still go on."

Which raises the interesting question of where they will go to. Now, as a matter of fact, every thinking person wants to stop the tide of evolution at some particular mark in his own mind. If I were to propose that people should wear no clothes at all, the lady might be shocked. But I should have as much right as any one else to say that she was obviously an individual with an unprogressive mind. If I were to propose that this reform should be imposed on people by force, she would be justly indignant. But I could answer her with her own

argument—that there had always been unprogressive people, and would be till Doomsday. If I then proposed that people should not only be stripped but skinned alive, she might, perhaps, see several moral objections. But her own argument would still hold good, or as good as it held in her own case; and I could say that evolution would not stop and the skinning would go on. The argument is quite as good on my side as on hers; and it is worthless on both.

Of course, it would be just as easy to urge people to progress or evolve in exactly the opposite direction. It would be as easy to maintain that they ought to go on wearing more and more clothes. It might be argued that savages wear fewer clothes, that clothes are a mark of civilization, and that the evolution of them will go on. I am highly civilized if I wear ten hats, and more highly civilized if I wear twelve hats. When I have already evolved so far as to put on six pairs of trousers, I must still hail the appearance of the seventh pair of trousers with the joy due to the waving banner of a great reform. When we balance these two lunacies against each other, the central point of sanity is surely apparent. The man who headed his inquiry "Have Women Gone Far Enough?" was at least in a real sense stating the point rightly. The point is that there *is* a "far enough." There is a point at which something that was once neglected becomes exaggerated; something that is valuable up to that stage becomes undesirable after that stage. It is possible for the human intellect to consider clearly at what stage, or in what condition, it would have enough complication of clothes, or enough simplification of clothes, or enough of any other social

THE PAGODA OF PROGRESS

element or tendency. It is possible to set a limit to the pagoda of human hats, rising for ever into infinity. It is possible to count the human legs, and, after a brief calculation, allot to them the appropriate number of trousers. There is such a thing as the miscalculation of making hats for a hydra or boots for a centipede, just as there are such things as bare-footed friars or the Hatless Brigade. There are exceptions and exaggerations, good and bad; but the point is that they are not only both good and bad, but they are good and bad in opposite directions. Let a man have what ideal of human costume or custom he likes. That ideal must still consist of elements in a certain proportion; and if that proportion is disturbed that ideal is destroyed. Let him once be clear in his own mind about what he wants, and then, whatever it is that he wants, he will not want the tide of evolution to wash it away. His ideal may be as revolutionary as he likes or as reactionary as he likes, but it must remain as he likes it. To make it more revolutionary or more reactionary is distortion; to suggest its growing more and more reactionary or revolutionary for ever is demented nonsense. How can a man know what he wants, how can he even want what he wants, if it will not even remain the same while he wants it?

The particular argument about women is not primarily the point; but as a matter of fact it is a very good illustration of the point. If a man thinks the Victorian conventions kept women out of things they would be the happier of having, his natural course is to consider what things they are; not to think that any things will do, so long as there are more of them. This is only the sort

of living logic everybody acts upon in life. Suppose somebody says, "Don't you think all this wood could be used for something else besides palings?" we shall very probably answer, "Well, I dare say it could," and perhaps begin to think of wooden boxes or wooden stools. But we shall not see, as in a sort of vision, a vista of wooden razors, wooden carving-knives, wooden coats and hats, wooden pillows and pocket-handkerchiefs. If people had made a false and insufficient list of the uses of wood, we shall try to make a true and sufficient list of them; but not imagine that the list can go on for ever, or include more and more of everything in the world. I am not establishing a scientific parallel between wood and womanhood. But there would be nothing disrespectful in the symbol, considered as a symbol; for wood is the most sacred of all substances: it typifies the divine trade of the carpenter, and men count themselves fortunate to touch it. Here it is only a working simile, but the point of it is this—that all this nonsense about progressive and unprogressive minds, and the tide of evolution, divides people into those who stick ignorantly to wood for one thing and those who attempt insanely to use wood for everything. Both seem to think it a highly eccentric suggestion that we should find out what wood is really useful for, and use it for that. They either profess to worship a wooden womanhood inside the wooden fences of certain trivial and temporary Victorian conventions; or else they profess to see the future as a forest of dryads growing more and more feminine for ever.

But it does not matter to the main question whether anybody else draws the line exactly where

I do. The point is that I am not doing an illogical thing, but the only logical thing, in drawing the line. I think tennis for women normal and football for women quite abnormal; and I am no more inconsistent than I am in having a wooden walking-stick and not a wooden hat. I do not particularly object to a female despot; but I do object to a female demagogue. And my distinction is as much founded on the substance of things as my eccentric conduct in having a wooden chair and table but not a wooden knife and fork. You may think my division wrong; the point is that it is not wrong in being a division. All this fallacy of false progress tends to obscure the old common sense of all mankind, which is still the common sense of every man in his own daily dealings: that everything has its place and proportion and proper use, and that it is rational to trust its use and distrust its abuse. Progress, in the good sense, does not consist in looking for a direction in which one can go on indefinitely. For there is no such direction, unless it be in quite transcendental things, like the love of God. It would be far truer to say that true progress consists in looking for the place where we can stop.

ON ELECTRIC HOUSES

I AM informed that there is an elaborately electrified house on view; a house in which the householder can be completely electrified; or possibly electroplated; or perhaps eventually electrocuted, which would seem a not unlikely refuge for anybody who had to live in that sort of house. Indeed, when I heard a lecturer a little while ago explain at some length (with the assistance of lantern slides) the complicated but complete apparatus of such a domestic system, I ventured to ask whereabouts in the electric house they had fitted up the electric chair. That would seem to be the most rapid and reasonable form of comfort in such a place. Or it might be useful for mild and well-considered experiments in murder, even before we came to the final experiment of suicide. The case for murder seems to me to be curiously neglected in the free and emancipated moral controversies of our time. I am perpetually being told that there are a number of hard cases arising out of the traditional respect for marriage. I could easily provide, from my own experience, half a dozen cases in which great discomfort has arisen out of the conventional prejudice against murder. I could give social instances which seem to cry out for assassination quite as pathetically as any that are supposed to cry out for divorce. Nor is it true to say that all such cases could be met by divorce or other division. Many are cases in which nothing but death could deprive the obnoxious person of his psychological or other

influence over better people than himself. To give the names of those in my social circle, whom I mark out for extinction, would at present be premature and even embarrassing. But if I had a nice, neat, comfortable electric chair fitted up in my house, on the model of those fitted up in American prisons, I could quickly and quietly make a clearance of a great many of these social difficulties. It would be easy to receive a particular guest with gestures of hospitality; to wave him to a special seat with a special earnestness; to see him settled comfortably in it; and then to press a button with a smile and a sigh of relief. The hospitable gesture involved is not difficult. People often wave me towards particular chairs in their drawing-rooms; generally towards any massive seat of marble or granite, or to any cast-iron throne firmly clamped to the floor. And they always say, with a beaming smile, that they think it will suit me better. With a heartfelt sincerity, I could say to the guest in question that I think the electric chair would suit him better. Difficulties might arise, of course, when he was dead; such difficulties have always embarrassed the moral reformer who assumed the specialist duties of the murderer. But, even here, electricity gives its ever-present aid. Obviously another button would be pressed: and the chair with its contents would sink through the floor, where the corpse would be mechanically ejected and consumed completely in an electric stove. Now here we have a real and serious social use for electricity; almost the only one I can think of, which could practically improve our present domestic life. But I cannot find a word about it in any of the accounts given to me of the model electric house.

That model house, I am informed, is described as the house of the future, dated less than a hundred years hence. I can imagine that even this prophecy might have its cheerful and enlivening aspect. The principle of comparison is often applied to our ancestors; and might equally wisely be applied to our descendants. We are often shown exhibitions of Elizabethan or Early Georgian domestic architecture, with the notion of suggesting to us how much architecture has advanced since those days. It is generally pointed out to us that many of the oldest English houses are only built of wood. It is generally *not* pointed out to us that most of the newest American houses are also built of wood. It is certainly not pointed out that these very houses that are now built of wood, are those in which there are most of the new electric appliances. These things are not emphasized; because the object of the exposition is quite the contrary. We are shown the rude hovels of our ancestors, that we may be consoled by feeling that things might be worse even than they are. We are told that ancient Britons lived in low huts of wattle, or what not, that we may consider a brick villa in Balham is almost tolerable by comparison. In short, there are many who insist on all that was dark or gross or negligent in the conditions of early barbarism, so that modern civilization may for one wild moment take on a fanciful semblance of decency. But old things have to be made very black indeed, if modern things are not to look blacker.

Well, I cannot see why the same ingenious trick of comparison should not be tried in the case of the future as well as the past. As we produce an appalling picture of our great-grandfather in his hideous

mud-hovel, so we naturally produce an equally appalling picture of our great-grandson in his hideous electric house. Both will equally serve to raise our own spirits, and to lift up our hearts in humble gratitude to Providence, for the privilege of having been born not only after the former event but before the latter. I can imagine crowds of modern people coming away from the Ideal Homes Exhibition with beaming faces and rejoicing hearts, crowing aloud with pleasure or leaping and skipping lightly upon the road, at the thought of what they have escaped, by being born ninety years too soon for the Electric Houses. Surely anything that encourages contentment and the reconciliation of men to their lots is to be encouraged upon social grounds; and it is just as reasonable to teach unlucky people that they are lucky not to be their own descendants as to teach them that they are lucky not to be their own ancestors. Neither perhaps will be wholly convincing or satisfying to a curious and inquiring mind; which might go so far as to demand that present conditions should be made decent in themselves, and not merely by comparison with the past or the future. But as an exposition of the comparative method, I can imagine few more effective than all this discussion about electricity and modern appliances. It is far more vivid and striking than the vague and dreary visions of the caves of the cave-men or the mud-cabins of the peasants. The historical pictures of these past things are seldom detailed and never accurate in detail. They are not to be compared for a moment with the white and glittering nightmare of the steel house. The new scientific architecture can be perfected to a point of ghastly and demoniac ugliness

towards which the dark fancies of our savage fathers would grope in vain; their legends were after all shadowy and unconvincing compared to our facts. None of those benighted slaves of mythology or theology ever imagined a hell to equal what the moderns have imagined as a home.

As to the confident assertions that these things really *will* be the characteristics of social existence a generation or two hence, I suppose we need not take them very seriously. People are always prophesying what will happen next; and they are always falling into the fatuous and obvious folly of making it merely the same as what has happened last. As the French king was certainly more powerful in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth century, everybody would have prophesied that at the end of the eighteenth century he would be more powerful still. At the end of the eighteenth century he has ceased to exist. All the predictions of this sort are based on the idea that there has never been such a thing as a revolution or a reaction. Whether there will be a reaction against materialism before the date mentioned I do not know; and it is probable that I shall not care. By that date I shall have ceased to exist on this earth, like the French monarchy. For that alone I can be thankful for life—and death.

ON THE PILLORY

AS a rule, those who discuss the good old days and how bad they were, are a little vague about how old they were. They compare the modern clerk with anybody from a Blue Briton to a True Blue Tory, or the modern newspaper with anything from the prehistoric carving to pre-Raphaelite painting. In a recent case which I have in mind, the writer fixed on a particular date in the past, for purposes of comparison; and rather a curious and interesting date too. He was concerned with some documents dealing with the years 1745-47; and told us the usual things about London being without lamp-posts, or having stage-coaches instead of railway trains. And it struck me that it would make something like an amusing parlour game to compare notes about what ideas the mention of any date calls up in your mind or mine.

Now the first thought that actually occurs to me about the years 1745-47 has nothing to do with trains or lamp-posts. It is this that those years mark more or less the last time in our history when any great estates were confiscated or any great lords suffered punishment for a crime against the State. The Jacobite nobles who were executed after the suppression of the '45 must have been the last of a long line of wealthy criminals or high-born martyrs who had found throughout the centuries that the law was higher than themselves. I am not exulting over their end; on the contrary, I am something of a Jacobite myself. I am only noting the fact that the

taking of their lives and more especially the taking of their property, was the sort of thing that has not happened since. Other sorts of legal operations, of course, have happened since. The punishment of poor people, for the sort of crimes that are the temptations of poor people, still went on then, and still goes on now. But the idea of punishing a public man as a public enemy has, for good or evil, become an impossibility. And the idea of taking away the private wealth of a public man is equally inconceivable, especially if he is a really wealthy man. It is said that modern government makes life safer; and the claim is very tenable. But at least it is certain that modern government makes life for the governing classes safer; and never before in the whole history of the world has it been so safe a business to govern.

Let me take only one example actually mentioned in the newspaper article. Among the horrors of Old London, it mentions not only the absence of lamp-posts, but the presence of pillories. I have never been able to see myself that a pillory was necessarily worse than a prison. It need not in most cases be a more drastic punishment. It was certainly in all cases a more democratic punishment. A man was not only tried by his peers, but punished by his peers. It was no idle distinction; for he was sometimes acquitted and applauded by his peers. If a man were pilloried for a crime which the populace regarded as a virtue, there was nothing to prevent the populace from pelting him with roses instead of rotten eggs. In fact, I think it would be far from a bad thing if you or I or any ordinary individual were occasionally put in the pillory, to discover the emotional atmosphere of our social

circle. Let us trust the experiment would be reassuring; it would at least be interesting and novel. The objection to the pillory suggested in the article consists in its ruthless publicity. But in the matter of punishment I am not reassured by privacy. I know that the most abominable cruelties have always been committed in complete privacy. I am not sure even about the punishments that are now hidden in prisons instead of being displayed in pillories. I do not say that we should do in public all that we now do in private. But it might well be questioned whether we ought to do in private the things we are so much ashamed to do in public. If there has been one respectable thing about the executioner, I think it is the fact that he was called the public executioner. I do not like his becoming the bearer of the bow-string; the secret messenger of a Sultan. But this is something of a separate question. It is enough to note here that there was at least good as well as evil in the publicity of the pillory. Indeed, there is only one real and unanswerable objection to the punishment of the pillory; and unfortunately it so happens that this is also the chief objection to the gallows, the prison, the reformatory, the scientific preventive settlement for potential criminals, and everything else of the kind. The only real objection to the pillory is that we should probably put the wrong man into it.

But let us consider for a moment the man who was put into it. Now nobody with an intelligent interest in the past, or an intelligent doubt about the present, would dream of taking the date of 1745 as the happy age to be regretted. It was a very bad period in many ways, possibly a worse period than our own; for many of the old humanities had passed with the

common creed of Christendom, while many of the modern humanities had not come in with the French Revolution. The period, like all periods, contained very noble figures; but they were either defeated like the last Jacobites or detached and eccentric like Dr. Johnson. Its politics were, if possible, more full of knavery than our own. On the other hand, its commercialism, though already increasing out of proportion, was still more honest than our own. But no man who understands the disease of the present would look for the cure in that epoch of the past. He would seek for another social system in its days of strength and fullness; for instance, the best period of the Middle Ages. There again he would find the pillory; but my immediate interest is in the person he might possibly find in it.

Now a man could be put in the pillory in mediæval times for what was then called forestalling, and is now called making a 'corner. In some countries he could be hanged. There are at this moment walking about Europe and America a number of placid, well-fed, well-dressed gentlemen who boast of having made corners. Suppose I were to suggest that they should stand in the pillory. Suppose I were to suggest that some of them should hang on the gallows. Suppose I were to propose to punish them in modern times as they would have been punished in mediæval times; suppose that, and you will measure the whole distance and difference of which I spoke when I said that the really powerful man has never been really punished since 1745. There may be individual exceptions due to peculiar circumstances, but I cannot think of them at the moment. It is no answer to say that the powerful have not broken the law. Those who are powerful

ON THE PILLORY

enough to make the law do not need to break it. The acts are not punishable in modern times which were actually punished in mediæval times. Nobody is so silly as to offer either period as a golden age; and there are real superiorities in the more modern epoch. But I doubt whether the matter is settled by pointing at a lamp-post; and I fear it may merely serve to remind us that the only tyrants who have suffered in our times have been hanged on lamp-posts in revolutions.

ON SENTIMENT

IN reading some recent discussions about Victorian fiction I have come upon a curious fallacy about what is called sentiment. It is generally called sentimentalism or sentimentality. The term, in any case, is always applied in a bad sense. And it is almost always applied exactly where it does not apply. There are apparently some people so constituted that they are sickened by any sentiment concerned with certain simple and popular things; such as the love of mothers or the charm of children. They wince at the very word "mother"; and quiver with intellectual disgust at the very mention of any such sentiment as "women and children first." But this sort of fastidiousness or disdain is the very opposite of what it professes to be. So far from being an attack on sentiment it is itself an excess of sensibility. It has the supreme sentimental fault of being affected by the mere associations of words, instead of by the intrinsic idea in things. There is nothing of illusion, or even superficiality, in recognizing the importance of the emotions belonging to these things. There is nothing weak about showing such feelings; there is nothing realistic about denying such feelings. The feelings are facts; they are even very fundamental facts. We are not the less dealing with facts, because we are dealing with a very large number of facts. You may be so constituted, in your nervous system, that what is common rapidly becomes commonplace. But that is because your emotions are easily exhausted; not because the

subject is exhausted. Your attitude is really and truly sentimental; because it is subjective. It is affected by repetition; but it is not in touch with the reality about the things repeated. As an objective fact, the hundredth blade of grass is as green as the first blade of grass. The hundredth sunbeam is as bright as the first sunbeam. And the hundredth child murdered by King Herod is as pathetic as the first. King Herod may have come to the end of his pleasure; but the mother has not come to the end of her pain. And her pain is a plain fact of nature, absolutely radical and realistic; as solid as a lump of rock. It has every quality of stone; antiquity, universality, simplicity, permanence. And a stone is not any the less a stone because it is not the only pebble on the beach.

It is obvious that anti-sentimentalism is only a rather priggish and a rather snobbish form of sentimentalism. The fastidious person is really preferring feelings to facts. Nevertheless, we all know that there is something weak and deleterious that deserves to be called sentimentalism. Only, as is commonly the case to-day, hardly anybody makes any attempt at defining the thing he is always denouncing; finding it much easier to denounce than to define. I will not claim a final definition here; but I will suggest a principle as a practical test. The sin of sentimentalism only occurs when somebody indulges a feeling, sometimes even a real feeling; at the prejudice of something equally real, which also has its rights. The most common form of this dishonesty is what is called "having it both ways." I have always felt it in the conventionalised laxity of fashionable divorce; where people want to change their partners as rapidly as at a dance, and yet want

again and again to thrill at the heroic finality of the sacramental vow, which is like the sound of a trumpet. They want to eat their wedding cake and have it.

It is as healthy to enjoy sentiment as to enjoy jam. In the evil of sentimentalism there must always be some suggestion of *stealing* jam. It has many milder forms and lighter occasions than those above mentioned, which I am not going to debate again. All that concerns me here is the general definition; that the evil is not in the recognition of the feeling as a fact; or even in the enjoyment of the feeling as a fact; it is in the destruction or the dishonouring of some other fact. It is in the attempt to combine a fact and falsehood in one act of the mind. It is not silly to think that a young soldier looks splendid with a plume or a sword, riding away to the tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me." Soldiers do go to battle and do leave girls behind; and the passions involved are not only romantic but real. But if we then make fancy pictures of war, and refuse to admit that wounds hurt, or that heroes can be killed, or that good causes can be defeated, then we are trying to hold two contrary conceptions in the mind at once. We want to admire the soldier and deny what is admirable in him.

In connection with Victorian literature, I will take a popular example; a play which everybody knows, which nearly everybody enjoys and admires; which I certainly heartily enjoy and admire; but which has not escaped the charge of sentimentality. And what strikes me as odd is that it is blamed where it does not fail, and not half so much blamed where it does. I mean Sir James Barrie's famous fantasia of "Peter Pan." I am not dealing with the aspect of

it that I like most; the pirate with the hook or the crocodile with the clock inside it. It would surely be an excess of sensibility to see anything particularly sentimental about them. But many sensible people have complained very scornfully of the opening of the final scene; of the bereaved mother moving sadly about the room or playing soft music on the piano. I am not sure that I agree with this complaint; though of course it depends how the thing is done. But real sentimentalism is a sin against reality; and this is not really a sin against reality. Mothers do miss their children; a mother probably would think of them with affection if the house were suddenly empty; possibly with more affection than at those exciting moments when it seems a little too full. Some ladies do play on pianos, though the taste is doubtless liable to abuse; and music is a perfectly genuine way of relieving the emotions. There is nothing really false in all this; and indeed the critics do not really mean that it is false, but only that it is familiar. Yet there is something that does ring false in the play, and it seems to have been much less criticized. The final decision of Peter Pan was a bad example of having it both ways. What is really wrong with that delightful masterpiece is that the master asked a question and ought to have answered it. But he could not bring himself to answer it; or rather he tried to say yes and no in one word. A very fine problem of poetic philosophy might be presented as the problem of Peter Pan. He is represented as a sort of everlasting elf, a child who never changes age after age, but who in this story falls in love with a little girl who is a normal person. He is given his choice between becoming normal with her or remaining immortal without

her; and either choice might have been made a fine and effective thing. He might have said that he was a god, that he loved all but could not live for any; that he belonged not to them but to multitudes of unborn babes. Or he might have chosen love, with the inevitable result of love, which is incarnation; and the inevitable result of incarnation, which is crucifixion; yes, if it were only crucifixion by becoming a clerk in a bank and growing old. But it was the fork of the road; and even in fairyland you cannot walk down two roads at once. The one real fault of sentimentalism in this fairy play is the compromise that is ultimately made; whereby he shall go free for ever but meet his human friend once a year. Like most practical compromises it is the most unpractical of all possible courses of action. Even the baby in that nursery could have seen that Wendy would be ninety in no time, after what would appear to her immortal lover a mere idle half-hour. But I only mention it here as the first example that occurs to me of the sentimental fault where it really exists; and the way in which it is often alleged where it does not exist. It is not sentimental, in the bad sense, to make a mother play on a piano; because the notes on a piano only profess to be notes and not words that define and decide. But it is sentimentalism to use words in order to confuse and weaken, when they ought to define and decide. It is not sentimental to deal with things of sentiment such as tone or melody or minor graces of life. It is not false to be sentimental about these things that are avowedly things of sentiment. The evil comes in when we waver about weighty matters; not when we allow gossamer and thistledown to follow their own nature, which is

to waver. And it may be noted that many great periods in the past, strong in arms and in counsel, gaining triumphs and building codes of law, reconstructing civilization or reawakening religion, were none the less very sentimental about lesser and lighter things. The great days of the Grand Siècle, of the Revolution, and of Napoleon were full of china shepherdesses and little opera tunes. But the great men of those days did not hesitate between the King and the Republic as we hesitate between a hundred new religions and stale philosophies. There is nothing feeble-minded about playing the flute, considered as playing the flute. But if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for the battle?

ON LEISURE

A GREAT part of the modern muddle arises from confusion and contradiction about the word "leisure." To begin with, of course, it should never be confused for a moment with the word "liberty." An artist has liberty, if he is free to create any image in any material that he chooses. But any one who will try to create anything out of anything will soon discover that it is not a leisurely occupation. On the other hand, a slave may have many hours of leisure, if the overseer has gone to sleep, or if there is no work for him to do at the moment, but he must be ready to do the work at any moment. The point is not so much that the master owns his toil as that he owns his time. But there are other difficulties and double meanings about the term, as it is used in a society like ours at present. If a man is practically compelled, by a sort of social pressure, to ride in the park in the morning or play golf in the afternoon or go out to grand dinners in the evening or finish up at night clubs at night, we describe all those hours of his day as hours of leisure. But they are not hours of leisure at all, in the other sense; as, for instance, on the fanciful supposition that he would like a little time to himself, that he would like to pursue a quite solitary and even unsociable hobby, that he would like really to idle, or on a more remote hypothesis, that he would like really to think. Now when modern social philosophers are generalizing about labour and leisure and the greater or lesser

degree of liberty for men and women in the modern world, they necessarily lump all these different meanings of leisure together and bring out a result that is not really representative. The weakness of all statistics is that, even when the numbers are generally right, the names are generally wrong. I mean that if somebody says there are so many Christians in Margate or in Mesopotamia, it is obvious that they are assuming that everybody is agreed on what is meant by a Christian. And we have sometimes seen even Christians who appeared to differ on the point. If somebody says that there is a certain percentage of educated people in Helio-
polis, Neb., he will very likely say it as firmly as he would say that there are so many negroes in that Nebraskan seat of culture. Whereas it is rather as if he were saying that there were so many opinionated people, which is a matter of opinion. Even the negro question, now I come to think of it, is considerably less concrete than such severe statisticians make it. There are probably almost as many shades of brown as there are shades of education. Before I went to America, I always thought the expression "coloured people" was as fantastic as a fairy-tale; it sounded as if some of the people were peacock green and others a rich mauve or magenta. I supposed that it was either a sort of joke, or else a sort of semi-ironical euphemism or parody of politeness. But when I went there, I found that it was simply a dull description of fact. These people really are all colours; at least they are all shades of one colour. There must be many more coloured people than there are black people. I will not insist on the delicate parallel between colour and culture. I will not inquire whether a completely

educated person is a more or less rare and refreshing sight than a completely coal-black negro. I merely point out that when people talk about "educational statistics," and make tables of the condition of culture in Nebraska or anywhere else, there is really nothing in their statements that is exact except the numbers; and the numbers must be inexact when there is nothing to apply them to. The statistician is trying to make a rigid and unchangeable chain out of elastic links.

All this is obvious enough; but it has been less generally noticed that the same applies to the legal and economic statements made nowadays about work and recreation and the rest. In their nature they deal exclusively with the quantity and not at all with the quality. Least of all has anybody dealt adequately with the effect of a social system on the quality of leisure. When we say lightly about a man in some employment or other, "What holidays does he get?" we only mean it in the sense of "How many holidays does he get?" or "How long are his holidays?" We do not put the question to ourselves in the form, "What sort of holidays does the general system of society allow him to get?" I am not arguing at the moment that anybody is indifferent to the welfare of any other person in particular; or that any other persons, past or present, had better holidays or ideal holidays; all that is connected with very much wider controversies. I am only pointing out that the structure of society does determine the nature of a man's leisure, almost as much as the nature of his labour. And I am pointing out that of all such statistical tables the most misleading may be a time-table.

It is obvious enough that there are men in the

ON LEISURE

world who seem to labour in a very leisurely way. It is still more obvious that there are men who seem to enjoy their leisure in a very laborious way. And of course it is a very difficult question of psychology to consider which of them gets the most out of life, or whether either of them gets as much as there is to be got. But when people come to making magnificent and sweeping generalizations about history and progress, when they tell us emphatically that science declares this and that about the relative wisdom or welfare of different societies, it is obvious that these sociological dogmas are very lax and inconclusive indeed. We have no exact way of testing the proportion of people in any society who really enjoy its social institutions more than they would enjoy other social institutions, especially if they had been trained with a different social sense. Nobody knows, for instance, whether the noise of modern London is not actually a friction to the nerves, which diminishes pleasure even while it drives people on to more pleasure. It is no answer to say that the people are driven to become yet noisier in order to forget the noise. It is no answer to the question of whether, as a fact, people would be happier if they had less friction, even if they seemed to have less fun. There is no way of measuring happiness in that scientific sense; and the scientists who try to do it do not prove anything, except that they have never had any. Nobody can prove positively, for instance, whether the strategical excitement of organized games is great enough to outweigh the loss of personal self-determination and adventure. A man can only say which of the two he likes best himself; and I have no difficulty at all in saying that. But in modern schools, for

instance, what is called playtime has become a sort of extended work-time, though both have probably been turned into rather more pleasant work. But none of it is so pleasant as playing alone to the sort of child who likes playing alone. Some of it is acutely and painfully unpleasant to that sort of child. It is obvious that sumptuous preparations for playing the latest professional form of American base-ball are no consolation to one who has a solitary genius for playing the fiddle or playing the fool. It may even be questioned whether playing tennis is always a substitute for playing truant. Since education permitted more play, it has perhaps permitted less leisure, and certainly less liberty.

I think the name of leisure has come to cover three totally different things. The first is being allowed to do something. The second is being allowed to do anything. And the third (and perhaps most rare and precious) is being allowed to do nothing. Of the first we have undoubtedly a vast and very probably a most profitable increase in recent social arrangements. Undoubtedly there is much more elaborate equipment and opportunity for golfers to play golf, for bridge-players to play bridge, for jazzers to jazz or for motorists to motor. But those who find themselves in the world where these recreations are provided will find that the modern world is not really a universal provider. They will find it made more and more easy to get some things and impossible to get others. The second sort of leisure is certainly not increased, and is on the whole lessened. The sense of having a certain material in hand, which a man may mould into *any* form he chooses, this is a sort of pleasure now almost confined to artists. Private property ought to mean that a



It is because artists do not practice . . . that the world
has lost its philosophy.

man feels about bricks and mortar as an artist feels about clay and marble. It ought to mean that gardening, whether or no it can be landscape-gardening, is as personal as landscape-painting. But this special sentiment can hardly flourish among those who live in public gardens or large hotels. And as for the third form of leisure, the most precious, the most consoling, the most pure and holy, the noble habit of doing nothing at all—that is being neglected in a degree which seems to me to threaten the degeneration of the whole race. It is because artists do not practice, patrons do not patronize, crowds do not assemble to reverently worship the great work of Doing Nothing, that the world has lost its philosophy and even failed to invent a new religion.

ON PLEASURE-SEEKING

THE denunciation of pleasure-seeking is rightly suspect, because it is itself so often the seeking of the very basest of pleasures. I mean, of course, the pleasure of being pained; I mean the pleasure of being shocked, the pleasure of being censorious—in a word, the pleasure of scandal. But there are criticisms of modern pleasure-seeking which are not merely the scandal-mongering of old women, which is a permanent temptation to men as they grow old. There are criticisms that rest on reasonable and eternal principles. And one of them, I think, is this—that so many modern pleasures aim at indiscriminate and incongruous combination. They are colours that kill each other; they are like the action of a musician who should try to express his universality by listening to five tunes at once.

For instance, it is not greedy to enjoy a good dinner, any more than it is greedy to enjoy a good concert. But I do think there is something greedy about expecting to enjoy the dinner and the concert at the same time. I say trying to enjoy them, for, it is the mark of this sort of complex enjoyment that it is not enjoyed. The fashion of having very loud music during meals in restaurants and hotels seems to me a perfect example of this chaotic attempt to have everything at once and do everything at once. Eating and drinking and talking have gone together by a tradition as old as the world; but the entrance of this fourth factor only spoils the other three. It is an ingenious scheme for com-

bining music to which nobody will listen with conversation that nobody can hear. Recall some of the great conversations of history and literature; imagine some of the great and graceful impromptus, some of the spontaneous epigrams of the wits of the past; and then imagine each of them shouted through the deafening uproar of a brass band. It seems to me an intolerable insult to a musical artist that people should treat his art as an adjunct to a refined gluttony. It seems a yet more subtle insult to the musician that people should require to be fortified with food and drink at intervals, to strengthen them to endure his music. I say nothing of the deeper and darker insult to that other artist, the cook, in the suggestion that men require to be inspired and rallied with drums and trumpets to attack the dangers of his dinner, as if it were a fortress bristling with engines of death. But in any case it is the combination of the two pleasures that is unpleasant. When people are listening to a good concert they do not ostentatiously produce large pork-pies and bottles of beer to enable them to get through it somehow. And if they do not bring their meals to their music, why should they bring their music to their meals?

I have noticed many other examples of this kind of luxury in the wrong place. I mean, the elaboration of enjoyments in such a way that they cannot be enjoyed. A little while ago I happened to be dining in the train; and I am very fond of dining in the train—or, indeed anywhere else. I know that people sometimes write to the papers, or even make scenes in the railway carriage, complaining of the railway dinner service; but my complaint was quite different—and indeed, quite contrary. I did not

complain of the dinner because it was too bad, but because it was too good. The pleasure of eating in trains is akin to the pleasure of picnics, and should have a character adapted to its abnormal and almost adventurous conditions. This dinner was what is called a good dinner—that is it was about twice as long as any normal person would want in his own home, and a great deal longer than he would want even in an ordinary restaurant. The train was also what is called a good train—that is, it was a train that swayed wildly from side to side in hurtling through England like a thunderbolt. Nobody who really wanted to enjoy a long and luxurious dinner would dream of sitting down to it under those conditions. Nobody would desire the restaurant tables to be shot round and round the restaurant like a giddy-go-round. Anybody would see in the abstract that it is foolish to attempt to possess simultaneously the advantage of luxury and leisure with the other advantage of speed. It is merely paying for a luxury and purchasing an inconvenience. Add to this the fact that, though the dinner was long, the time given for it was short. For there were other eager epicures waiting to be flung against windows while balancing asparagus or dissecting sardines. Other happy gourmets were to have the opportunity of spilling their soup and upsetting their coffee on that careering vehicle. Everybody concerned in that trainload of banqueters was in as much of a hurry as the train.

As a fact, these combinations are simply conventions. It is not that anybody, left to his own intelligence, would prefer to enjoy a concert in a restaurant, or a dinner in a railway-carriage. It is that some rather vulgar people do not think a

restaurant is conventionally complete without a programme of music, or a dinner without a catalogue of courses. These conventions are in their result quite cold and uncomfortable. They entirely neglect the art of pleasure-seeking, in the only intelligent sense of seeking pleasure, where it is to be found. It is generally to be found much more in isolation, in distinction and even in contrast. There was some Oriental sage or other who said, "If you have two pence, buy with one a loaf and the other a flower." I would myself venture to substitute for the flower a cigar or a glass of wine, only that it would be rather ascetical to consume these things at the price. But I am sure it is a sound principle to have one luxury accompanied by plainer things, like a jewel in a simple setting. This is not identical—indeed it is inconsistent—with what is commonly called the Simple Life, which generally means a monotonous mediocrity of experience, without either luxury or austerity. The real pleasure-seeking is the combination of luxury and austerity in such a way that the luxury can really be felt. And any sort of crowding together of more or less contradictory pleasures in contempt of this principle, is not so much pleasure-seeking as pleasure-spoiling. Those who allow the colours of enjoyment thus to kill each other can with strict propriety be called kill-joys.

There is another moral which I have more than once noted, though it is not generally understood. The sort of ceremony that the world complains of as antiquated and artificial is really much more fresh and simple than the ceremonies of the world. The old pagentry of heralds or priests was really more elementary, almost in the sense of elemental, than

the pomps and vanities of the modern world; it was more elemental because it dealt more directly with elements. That sort of ritualism might almost be called a rule for keeping ritual simple. Left to itself, in our secular and social life, it becomes extravagantly complex. The old systems had much more sense of the necessity of doing one thing at a time. They had much more of the rational notion of knowing what they were doing.

Thus one of the old Parliaments or Church Councils might have many formalities; but there was nothing corresponding to the noisy band in the crowded restaurant. They did not bang drums and blow bassoons while they argued with their enemies as the others do while they talk to their friends. An ecclesiastical ceremony, like the assumption by a bishop of his mitre and pastoral staff, may seem to some elaborate or extravagant; but there is nothing in it comparable to the elaborate and extravagant city banquet served on an express train. The bishop seldom prides himself on putting on his mitre in a motor-car travelling at any number of miles an hour. What is the matter with the modern ceremonies is that they have not only become elaborate but become entangled. We have the complication of two complicated things caught and hooked in each other, like two gigantic clocks wrestling. Moreover, there is the further complication produced by rapid change combined with rigid discipline. The old customs were at least old enough to become second nature. But a fashion is always sufficiently new to be unnatural. We may think it a meaningless pomposity that a judge should assume a black cap or a cardinal be presented with a red hat. But the judge does not have to change his cap every

ON PLEASURE-SEEKING

season, and there is no necessity for the red hat to be a stylish hat. The combination between the rigidity and the rapidity of fashions leads to a mobilization of an almost military type; and, compared with that the things that were more old-fashioned were also more free.

ON DOMESTIC SERVANTS

DISCUSSIONS about domestic servants seem always to be marked by a highly modern and enlightened confusion on both sides. On the reforming side we have nothing but the extraordinary notion that you can only improve a family by making it more like a factory. On the conservative side we have very little except rather snobbish sneers at the bare idea of any poor person playing on the piano. The last symbol is significant, because it illustrates the one fundamental mistake of both reformers and conservatives: the notion that the social separation of mistresses and servants must be an old thing, and their association must be a new thing. The truth is that the ancient world was more familiar with its slaves than the modern world with its servants. When Christianity humanized the remains of slavery, the association grew less servile and more domestic; it was only in the industrial time that a new fastidiousness and shyness broke it up. It was an amusing irony. Victorian ladies and gentlemen sniffed over their fierce feudal ancestors whose servants dined below the salt, while their own servants dined below the floor. They would never have dreamed of tolerating a housemaid at the other end of their own table, but kept her in a kind of cavern under the pavement. To do them justice, the housemaid would probably have hated dining with them quite as much as they hated dining with her. A new social spirit had come, and the classes were really separated. But it was not

always so, and the very case of the piano is enough to remind us of it. Why, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Pepys had their servant girl in the drawing-room with them in the evening to sing glees with them at their own piano, or what corresponded to their piano. None of the three had a shadow of the modern embarrassment in the matter; there was no sneering and no snobbishness. Manners were rougher in those days, and Mrs. Pepys might very possibly have clouted the girl over the head; but she would never have been surprised to hear of her playing the piano.

Nevertheless, the worst mistake of all has been made by the reformers, and not the conservatives. For it is a mistake at the very root of all the modern mistakes. It is excellently illustrated in a single fact. It was argued at the inquiry that the chief trouble of servants was in preparing the evening meal for the family, and it was therefore innocently proposed to abolish the evening meal for the family. It was not proposed to abolish anything else of all the fussy formalities of modern daily life. The servants would still, presumably, have to dust half-a-hundred objectless ornaments that the family never look at, and all sorts of odds and ends of furniture that the family never use. The one thing to be abolished is the one thing that does make the family feel like a family. It is the one thing that does really connect them with their feudal ancestors, and probably their prehistoric ancestors, as well as their most remote descendants—the ancient and immortal institution of the feast after work, of reunion and refreshment in the evening. Obviously, any reformer thinking in terms of reality would start with this as the unalterable reality. Then he

would reform other things so as to save it—as, for instance, abolish other duties, give the servant other compensations, simplify conditions so that this might be done without a servant, and so on. Of course, he gets hold of the sow by the wrong ear, and starts making his silk purse of that.

The more I see of the world to-day the more I am certain that it suffers from a certain tail-foremost trick of thought. It does not so much allow the tail to wag the dog as dock the tail of its dog, instead of docking the dog of its tail. It takes the tail first, and then considers whether a quadruped is a suitable appendage to it. It takes the trivial thing first and tries to put it right, without caring whether it is putting the important thing wrong. And just as a gentleman would not really wish to walk down the street followed only by a fine bushy tail instead of a faithful hound, so it will generally be found that the trivial thing, when separated from the important thing, remains just as trivial when it is put right as if it were left wrong. If a man is so careful of his silk hat, and so afraid of its suffering a spot of rain, that he cuts out the whole of the crown and wears only the brim, he will suffer two inconveniences. First, he may get a cold in his head, which some mystics think more important than his hat; and second, he will also have the needless nuisance of wearing a stiff rim round his head which serves none of the purposes of a hat, though it have something of the appearance of a halo. He will not only have lost a convenience, but also gained an encumbrance. If a man is so much afraid of being thrown out of a hansom cab (as many a time I've been) that as soon as he has got into it he insists on the horse being taken out of

it, he will find he has made a double mistake. He has not only lost a horse, but he has found a cab—an object which in isolation and immobility is not a very useful trifle to possess or a very easy trifle to dispose of. He has taken away the whole motive force and meaning of a cab; but he still has a cab that is quite meaningless. He has sold a good horse to buy a white elephant. Now that little comedy is constantly being acted in the intellectual world. Men reform a thing by removing the reality from it, and then do not know what to do with the unreality that is left. Thus they would reform religious institutions by removing the religion. They do not seem to see that to take away the creed and leave the servants of the creed is simply to go on paying servants for nothing. To keep the temple without the god is to be hag-ridden with superstitious vigilance about a hollow temple—about a mere shell made of brick or stone. To support the palace and not support the king is simple to pay for an empty palace. Just as such philosophers would deal with the temple and the palace, so some of these other social philosophers would deal with the household or the home. They never think of asking with what object they maintain a house. They are quite ready to maintain the house so long as they can abandon the object. They never seem to reflect that, without that object, or with some other object, there never would have been any house at all. There would have been something else quite unlike a house and possibly more like a hive. This idea of going back to the beginning and considering the end, of thinking of the purpose of anything as a whole, seems to these people to be merely metaphysical and mystical, though it is

obviously the only thing that is really material and practical. The course that seems to them practical will leave them loaded with a burden of antiquated shells and ruins. There is a case for using these things and a case for destroying them; but there is no case for the current fashion of preserving them and destroying their use. But reformers of this kind do not seem to care how many elaborate trifles they leave to trouble us, as long as they remove the purpose that once at least seemed to be worth the trouble.

The proposal to abolish the family feast in the evening is an excellent example of all this. There is a case for abolishing the family feast because there is a case for abolishing the family and the family homestead and the family name. There is no inevitable reason why these particular people should live together in one particular house at all; they could be kept in carefully numbered cells in some commodious State prison of the Utopia of the sociologists. But as there are people who like living in families, these are precisely the things that they like about it. They like things of the nature of the evening meal; if they were asked for what they valued the house they would probably think first of the evening meal. As it is, they are asked to give up the social reunion they value most, and still preserve the whole house and all the rest of the housework. The servant girl is still forced to dust the dining-room in which nobody will dine. She is still ordered to polish the dinner-table at which nobody will have dinner. A whole factory of futilities, a vast machinery of meaningless and petty duties will remain to be done, and nothing has been removed except the central social function

that was the only excuse for any of them. But the strange part of this modern psychology is that it never thinks of beginning by altering the trivialities. It seems to imagine that French-polishing and vacuum-cleaning are more permanent than eating and drinking. Very few of the Utopian visions offered us to-day have really removed the small mechanical complexities and conventions of life. They mostly conceive the details of every day very much as they are at this moment in any villa in Surbiton. All that they do alter is the essential institution behind the convention, or the essential idea behind the essential institution. They do not imagine a man and a woman married, but renewing their honeymoon elsewhere than in the suburban villa—in a tent, or at the top of a tree. They are more likely to imagine them still living like married people in the suburban villa, only they are not married. They do not seem so much disposed to imagine some more popular figure than the policeman arresting or punishing people for their crimes, as rather to keep the policeman but abandon the whole idea of crime and punishment, substituting some more humane philosophy of putting all sorts of ordinary people in padded cells till they die. And so, in the case of the domestic dinner-party, they do not seem disposed to save the essentials of it by cutting it down to its essentials; they do not say it should be more simplified from luxury, or more equalized among all classes of society, or given everywhere more opportunity to return to its own original nature. They have no notion of the original nature of a feast, any more than of the original nature of a family. Just as they would alter the eternal family in the fashion of the temporary

CHESTERTON'S ESSAYS

factory, so they would alter the eternal feast in the fashion of the temporary 'table reserved at a restaurant. It is queer topsy-turvydom to live in; but it will probably only last our time.

ON EVIL EUPHEMISMS

SOMEBODY has sent me a book on Companionate Marriage; so called because the people involved are not married and will very rapidly cease to be companions. I have no intention of discussing here that somewhat crude colonial project. I will merely say that it is here accompanied with sub-titles and other statements about the rising generation and the revolt of youth. And it seems to me exceedingly funny that, just when the rising generation boasts of not being sentimental, when it talks of being very scientific and sociological—at that very moment everybody seems to have forgotten altogether what was the social use of marriage and to be thinking wholly and solely of the sentimental. The practical purposes mentioned as the first two reasons for marriage, in the Anglican marriage service, seem to have gone completely out of sight for some people, who talk as if there were nothing but a rather wild version of the third, which may relatively be called romantic. And this, if you please, is supposed to be an emancipation from Victorian sentiment and romance.

But I only mention this matter as one of many, and one which illustrates a still more curious contradiction in this modern claim. We are perpetually being told that this rising generation is very frank and free, and that its whole social ideal is frankness and freedom. Now I am not at all afraid of frankness. What I am afraid of is fickleness. And there is a truth in the old proverbial connection

between what is fickle and what is false. There is in the very titles and terminology of all this sort of thing a pervading element of falsehood. Everything is to be called something that it is not; as in the characteristic example of Companionate Marriage. Everything is to be recommended to the public by some sort of synonym which is really a pseudonym. It is a talent that goes with the time of electioneering and advertisement and newspaper headlines; but whatever else such a time may be, it certainly is not specially a time of truth.

In short, these friends of frankness depend almost entirely on Euphemism. They introduce their horrible heresies under new and carefully complimentary names; as the Furies were called the Eumenides. The names are always flattery; the names are also nonsense. The name of Birth-Control, for instance, is sheer nonsense. Everybody has always exercised birth-control; even when they were so paradoxical as to permit the process to end in a birth. Everybody has always known about birth-control, even if it took the wild and unthinkable form of self-control. The question at issue concerns different forms of birth-prevention; and I am not going to debate it here. But if I did debate it, I would call it by its name. The same is true of an older piece of sentiment indulged in by the frank and free: the expression "Free Love." That also is a Euphemism; that is, it is a refusal of people to say what they mean. In that sense, it is impossible to prevent *love* being free, but the moral problem challenged concerns not the passions, but the will. There are a great many other examples of this sort of polite fiction; these respectable disguises adopted by those who are always railing

against respectability. In the immediate future there will probably be more still. There really seems no necessary limit to the process; and however far the anarchy of ethics may go, it may always be accompanied with this curious and pompous ceremonial. The sensitive youth of the future will never be called upon to accept Forgery as Forgery. It will be easy enough to call it Homœography or Script-Assimilation or something else that would suggest, to the simple or the superficial, that nothing was involved by a sort of socializing or unification of individual handwriting. We should not, like the more honest Mr. Fagin, teach little boys to pick pockets; for Mr. Fagin becomes far less honest when he becomes Professor Faginski, the great sociologist, of the University of Jena. But we should call it by some name implying the transference of something; I cannot at the moment remember the Greek either for pocket or pocket-handkerchief. As for the social justification of murder, that has already begun; and earnest thinkers had better begin at once to think about a nice inoffensive name for it. The case for murder, on modern relative and evolutionary ethics, is quite overwhelming. There is hardly one of us who does not, in looking round his or her social circle, recognize some chatty person or energetic social character whose disappearance, without undue fuss or farewell, would be a bright event for us all. Nor is it true that such a person is dangerous only because he wields unjust legal or social powers. The problem is often purely psychological, and not in the least legal; and no legal emancipations would solve it. Nothing would solve it but the introduction of that new form of liberty which we may agree to

call, perhaps, the practice of Social Subtraction. Or, if we like, we can model the new name on the other names I have mentioned. We may call it Life-Control or Free Death; or anything else that has as little to do with the point of it as Companionate Marriage has to do with either marriage or companionship.

Anyhow, I respectfully refuse to be impressed by the claim to candour and realism put forward just now for men, women, and movements. It seems to me obvious that this is not really the age of audacity, but merely of advertisement; which may rather be described as caution kicking up a fuss. Much of the mistake arises from the double sense of the word publicity. For publicity also is a thoroughly typical euphemism or evasive term. Publicity does not mean revealing public life in the interests of public spirit. It means merely flattering private-enterprises in the interests of private persons. It means paying compliments in public; but not offering criticisms in public. We should all be very much surprised if we walked out of our front-door one morning and saw a hoarding on one side of the road saying, "Use Miggle's Milk; It Is All Cream," and a hoarding on the other side of the road inscribed, "Don't Use Miggle's Milk; It's Nearly All Water." The modern world would be much upset if I were allowed to set up a flaming sky-sign proclaiming my precise opinion of the Colonial Port Wine praised in the flaming sign opposite. All this advertisement may have something to do with the freedom of trade; but it has nothing to do with the freedom of truth. Publicity must be praise and praise must to some extent be euphemism. It must put the matter in a milder and more inoffensive

form than it might be put, however much that mildness may seem to shout through megaphones or flare in headlines. And just as this sort of loud evasion is used in favour of bad wine and bad milk, so it is used in favour of bad morals. When somebody wishes to wage a social war against what all normal people have regarded as a social decency, the very first thing he does is to find some artificial term that shall sound relatively decent. He has no more of the real courage that would pit vice against virtue than the ordinary advertiser has the courage to advertise ale as arsenic. His intelligence, such as it is, is entirely a commercial intelligence, and to that extent entirely conventional. He is a shop-keeper who dresses the shop-window; he is certainly the very reverse of a rebel or a rioter who breaks the shop-window. If only for this reason, I remain cold and decline the due reverence to Companionate Marriage and the book which speaks so reverentially about the Revolt of Youth. For this sort of revolt strikes me as nothing except revolting; and certainly not particularly realistic. With the passions which are natural to youth we all sympathize; with the pain that often arises from loyalty and duty we all sympathize still more; but nobody need sympathize with publicity experts picking pleasant expressions for unpleasant things; and I for one prefer the coarse language of our fathers.

ON A HUMILIATING HERESY

MANY modern people like to be regarded as slaves. I mean the most dismal and degraded sort of slaves; moral and spiritual slaves. Popular preachers and fashionable novelists can safely repeat that men are only what their destiny makes them; and that there is no choice or challenge in the lot of man. Dean Inge declares, with a sort of gloomy glee, that some absurd American statistics or experiments show that heredity is an incurable disease and that education is no cure for it. Mr. Arnold Bennett has said that many of his friends drink too much; but that it cannot be helped, because they cannot help it. I am not Puritanic about drink; I have drunk all sorts of things; and in my youth, often more than was good for me. But in any conceivable condition, drunk or sober I should be furious at the suggestion that I could not help it. I should have wanted to punch the head of the consoling fatalist who told me so. Yet nobody seems to punch the heads of consoling fatalists. This, which seems to me the most elementary form of self-respect, seems to be the one thing about which even the sensitive are insensible. These modern persons are very sensitive about some things. They would be furious if somebody said they were not gentlemen; though there is really no more historical reason for pretending that every man is a gentleman than that every man is a marquis, or a man-at-arms. They are frightfully indignant if we say they are not Christians; though

they hold themselves free to deny or doubt every conceivable idea of Christianity, even the historical existence of Christ. In the current cant of journalism and politics, they would almost prosecute us for slander if we said they were not Democrats; though any number of them actually prefer aristocracy or autocracy; and the real Democrats in English society are rather a select few. We might almost say that the true believers in democracy are themselves an aristocracy. About all these words men can be morbidly excitable and touchy. They must not be called pagans or plebeians or plain men or reactionaries or oligarchs. But they may be called slaves; they may be called monkeys; and, above all, they may be called machines. One would imagine that the really intolerable insult to human dignity would be to say that human life is not determined by human will. But so long as we do not say they are heathen, we may say they are not human. We may say that they develop as blindly as a plant or turn as automatically as a wheel.

There are all sorts of ways in which this humiliating heresy expresses itself. One is the perpetual itch to describe all crime as lunacy. Now, quite apart from virtue, I would much rather be thought a criminal than a criminal lunatic. As a point not of virtue but of vanity, I should be less insulted by the title of a murderer than by the title of a homicidal maniac. The murderer might be said, not unfairly, to have lost the first fragrance of his innocence, and all that keeps the child near to the cherubim. But the maniac has lost more than innocence; he has lost essence; the complete personality that makes him a man. Yet everybody is talking as if it would be quite natural, and even

nice, to be excused for immorality on the ground of idiocy. The principle is applied, with every flourish of liberality and charity, to personalities whom one would imagine quite proud of being personal. It is applied not only to the trivial and transient villains of real life, but to the far more solid and convincing villains of romance.

A distinguished doctor has written a book about the madmen of Shakespeare. By which he did not mean those few fantastic and manifest madmen, whom we might almost call professional madmen, who merely witnessed to the late Elizabethan craze for lurid and horrible grotesques. Ford or Webster, or some of their fellows, would hardly have hesitated to have a ballet or chorus of maniacs, like a chorus of fairies or fashionable beauties. But the medical gentleman seems to have said that any number of the serious characters were mad. Macbeth was mad; Hamlet was mad; Ophelia was congenitally mad; and so on. If Hamlet was really mad, there does not seem much point in his pretending to be mad. If Ophelia was always mad, there does not seem much point in her going mad. But anyhow, I think a saner criticism will always maintain that Hamlet was sane. He must be sane even in order to be sad; for when we get into a world of complete unreality, even tragedy is unreal. No lunatic ever had so good a sense of humour as Hamlet. A homicidal maniac does not say, "Your wisdom would show itself more richer to signify that to his doctor"; he is a little too sensitive on the subject of doctors. The whole point of Hamlet is that he is really saner than anybody else in the play; though I admit that being sane is not identical with what some call being sensible. Being outside the world, he sees all

round it; where everybody else sees his own side of the world, his own worldly ambition, or hatred or love. But, after all, Hamlet pretended to be mad in order to deceive fools. We cannot complain if he has succeeded.

But, whatever we may say about Hamlet, we must not say this about Macbeth. Hamlet was only a mild sort of murderer; a more or less accidental and parenthetical murderer; an amateur. But Macbeth was a good, solid, serious, self-respecting murderer; and we must not have any nonsense about him. For the play of *Macbeth* is, in the supreme and special sense, the Christian Tragedy; to be set against the Pagan Tragedy of *Œdipus*. It is the whole point about *Œdipus* that he does not know what he is doing. And it is the whole point about Macbeth that he does know what he is doing. It is not a tragedy of Fate, but a tragedy of Freewill. He is tempted of a devil, but he is not driven by a destiny. If the actor pronounces the words properly, the whole audience ought to feel that the story may yet have an entirely new ending, when Macbeth says suddenly, "We will proceed no further in this business." The incredible confusion of modern thought is always suggesting that any indication that men have been influenced is an indication that they have been forced. All men are always being influenced; for every incident is an influence. The question is, which incident shall we allow to be most influential. Macbeth was influenced; but he consented to be influenced. He was not, like a blind tragic pagan, obeying something he thought he ought to obey. He does not worship the Three Witches like the Three Fates. He is a good enlightened Christian, and sins against the light.

The fancy for reading fatalism into this play, where it is most absent, is probably due to the fallacy of a series; or three things in a row. It misleads Macbeth's critics just as it misleads Macbeth. Almost all our pseudo-science proceeds on the principle of saying that one thing follows on another thing, and then dogmatizing about the third thing that is to follow. The whole argument about the Superman, for instance, as developed by Nietzsche and other sophists, depends entirely on this trick of the incomplete triad. First the scientist or sophist asserts that when there was a monkey, there was bound to be a man. Then he simply prophesies that something will follow the man, as the man followed the monkey. This is exactly the trick used by the Witches in Macbeth. They give him first a fact he knows already, that he is Thane of Glamis; then one fact really confirmed in the future, that he is Thane of Cawdor;⁶ and then something that is not a fact at all, and need never be a fact at all, unless he chooses to make it one out of his own murderous fancy. This false series, seeming to point at something, though the first term is trivial and the last untrue, does certainly mislead many with a fallacious sense of fate. It has been used by materialists in many ways to destroy the sense of moral liberty; and it has murdered many things besides Duncan.

ON LIBERTIES AND LOTTERIES

ALMOST alone among my contemporaries I have not been a sceptic about Liberty; but I recognize the materials for scepticism in the discussion about liberties. The difference between the liberties valued by one community and those valued by another is doubtless very great. The vulgar modern argument used against religion, and lately against common decency, would be absolutely fatal to any idea of liberty. It is perpetually said that because there are a hundred religions claiming to be true, it is therefore impossible that one of them should really be true. The argument would appear on the face of it to be illogical, if any one nowadays troubled about logic. It would be as reasonable to say that because some people thought the earth was flat, and others (rather less incorrectly) imagined it was round, and because anybody is free to say that it is triangular or hexagonal, or a rhomboid; therefore it has no shape at all; or its shape can never be discovered; and, anyhow, modern science must be wrong in saying it is an oblate spheroid. The world must be some shape, and it must be that shape and no other; and it is not self-evident that nobody can possibly hit on the right one. What so obviously applies to the material shape of the world equally applies to the moral shape of the universe. The man who describes it may not be right; but it is no argument against his rightness that a number of other people must be wrong.

As I say, the same childish argument is now

extended to ordinary morality or decency. It is insisted that, because the decorum of a Roman matron is not exactly the same as that of a Sandwich Islander, therefore there can be no superiority in the one over the other; no possible way of deciding which is the better of the two; and, ultimately, no meaning or value in dignity or propriety at all. The conclusion is so unnatural that, even if the argument were apparently logical, we might be excused for suspecting it of being sophistical. But, as a matter of fact, the argument is not logical enough to be called a sophistry. It is simply transparently untenable; for it rests on the same fallacy: that one man cannot be right because a number of other men are wrong. In this case, of course, it is true that the question is conditioned by different circumstances and that the principle must be applied in different ways. In this case it is true that we cannot say that the whole world is alike, in the sense that we can say that the whole world is round. It is true, but this fashionable argument does not prove it to be true. So far as that argument goes, there might be one costume suitable to all mankind, as there is one custom of washing suitable to all mankind, though some men neglect it and are dirty. All we complain of in that aspect, is that the sceptic always refuses to be a rationalist.

But the point here is that, if this argument is fatal to faith or modesty, it is a thousand times fatal to liberty. If we simply say that this or that practice is tolerated in this or that place, if we refuse to look for any moral or metaphysical principle by which the differences can be tested, we shall find the definition of liberty dissolving into a

dust of differentiations and exceptions. And I very much fear that this is exactly what the definition of liberty will really do. I am very much afraid, as things are going at present, that the next generation will have quite as little idea of what their fathers meant by dying for liberty, as the last generation had of what their fathers meant by dying for religion or sound theology or the true faith. There is already a large number of modern writers who talk as if the old notion of independence, national or personal, were something simply inconceivable as well as impossible; exactly as the champions of liberty, a hundred years ago, spoke of the mysterious dogmas of the Church. Indeed, it is quite as easy, by the methods of the rationalistic heckler, to suggest that freedom is nonsense as that faith is nonsense. It is a great deal too easy. That is what made me suspect it from the first in both cases. But, anyhow, it is perfectly true that variation gives the sceptic an opportunity in both cases. It is easy to show that liberties are local; it is much less easy to prove that Liberty is universal.

For instance, I am writing these words in a country which many of my countrymen regard as utterly crushed by a system destructive of every liberty. There is no doubt that Italy has restrained the liberty of the Press; it can easily be argued that it has restrained the liberty of the people. But it is quite certain that the people enjoy, and take for granted, quite definite forms of liberty that do not exist in England at all. The Italians would think Mussolini was mad if he forbade Lotteries, as the English law forbids Lotteries. It would seem to them very much what forbidding Lawn Tennis would seem to us. The whole Latin world regards

the notion of not being allowed to drink beer between three and six very much as we should regard the idea of not being allowed to eat buns on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is quite inadequate to call it tyranny; because they would call it lunacy. Now I have argued often enough upon these points elsewhere, and I am not going to dwell on these particular points now. I am merely using them to point out that, even where we imagine there is a clear-cut issue against liberty, there is a considerable complexity when we come to argue about liberties. If the costume of the Sandwich Islander is an argument against abstract decency, then certainly the liberty of the lottery is an argument against abstract liberty. If the thousand and one religions make a case against religion, then the thousand and one liberties make a case against liberty. And I am very much afraid that, in the present mood of mankind, that case may carry weight. It will be very useful to the monopolist, or modern tyrant, who carries most weight in the modern world; and when he has taken away all English freedom from the Englishman and all Italian freedom from the Italian, he will smile broadly and say that, after all, men have never agreed about the definition of being free.

I am so paradoxical as to think that there is a real theory of freedom. Perhaps I may have a shot at expounding it in another essay. But the theory is bound to be rather theoretical; and the modern world, having tried in vain to be thoughtful, has fallen back on the abject alternative of being practical. And it looks to me as if liberty would suffer in that practical age much more than religion suffered in the age of the French Revolution. It can easily

be derided, quite as successfully as Victorian decorum or the legend of Mrs. Grundy. But just as there are other kinds of decorum besides Victorian decorum, and yet a sense of dignity and decency behind them all, so there can be other kinds of freedom besides that of the free-born Englishman, and yet leave an ultimate significance in the ideal of being free. Broadly, I should say that the commonwealth is healthy in which all things are *not* common, but some things, in the exact sense of the phrase, "distinguished." Many who talk about distinction mean only aristocratic distinction; and by that mean only fashion. But fashion is almost the opposite of distinction. A democracy can be distinguished, if its citizens are distinguishable; if each has an area of choice in which he really chooses. To keep that area of choice as large as possible is the real function of freedom. But, as there is no space here for me to develop my cleutheromaniac dogma on this page, I feel inclined to ask my readers to do it for me; or at least to think it out for themselves. I dare not offer a prize; I understand it is now likely to be classed with a Lottery. And it would be dreadful if free-born Englishmen were allowed to do what is permitted to Italian slaves. Put if any one thinks he has a definition that will save Liberty, I should be interested . . . and, I will add, surprised.

ON BUSINESS EDUCATION

A LONG time ago I pointed out the fallacy of crying out for a practical man. I noted, what should be obvious enough, that when a problem is really bad and basic, we should rather wail and pray and cry aloud for an unpractical man. The practical man only knows the machine in practice; just as many a man can drive a motor-car who could not mend it, still less design it. The more serious is the trouble, the more probable it is that some knowledge of scientific theory will be required; and though the theorist will be called unpractical, he will probably be also indispensable. What is generally meant by a business man is a man who knows the way in which our particular sort of modern business does generally work. It does not follow that he is imaginative enough to suggest something else, when it obviously does not work. And (unless I very much misread the signs of the modern transition) we are soon coming to a time when everybody will be looking for somebody who can suggest something else.

I am glad to see that what I applied to the unpractical reformer has been applied, by an unimpeachably practical man, to the unpractical instructor. Mr. John C. Parker, a hundred-per-cent American, a highly successful engineer, the vigorous agent of a company named after Edison--in short, a man with all the unquestioned stigmata of a Regular Guy, rigorous and energetic in the application of science to business, has recently astonished

his friends by delivering an address with the truly admirable title, "Wanted—An Unpractical Education." I have only read his remarks in an indirect form, but they seem to me quite excellent remarks. "My complaint would be rather that training youth to earn a living is not education at all; second, that a specific training may keep the youngster from earning the best kind of living; and third, that it can't be done in school anyhow." Or again, "I would infinitely prefer that education fit him for happiness and decency in poverty, than for wealth acquired through the sacrifice of himself and his character." These are almost startlingly sensible counsels; though what they would look like side by side with those shiny and strenuous advertisements inscribed "You Can Add Ten Thousand Dollars to Your Salary," or "This Man Trebled his Turnover in Two Weeks," it is not my province to conjecture.

But this extraordinary affair called Business Education, which has begun to be supported in England, after having long subsisted in America, has another aspect perhaps not so easy to explain. When I say that we want to train the citizen and not the city man, or the equivocal "something in the city," I mean even more than Mr. Parker's just and rational ideal of "the fitting of students to live richly and fully and contribute most broadly to the welfare of the social group who have paid for their education." Being myself a senile survival of the old republican idealism (I use the adjective to express the American political principle, not the American political party) I mean something else, as well as the mere social enjoyment of culture. I mean that to train a citizen is to train a critic. The whole

point of education is that it should give a man abstract and eternal standards, by which he can judge material and fugitive conditions. If the citizen is to be a reformer, he must start with some ideal which he does not obtain merely by gazing reverently at the unreformed institutions. And if any one asks, as so many are asking: "What is the use of my son learning all about Ancient Athens and remote China and mediæval guilds and monasteries, and all sorts of dead or distant things, when he is going to be a superior scientific plumber in Plimlico?" the answer is obvious enough. "The use of it is that he may have some power of comparison, which will not only prevent him from supposing that Plimlico covers the whole planet, but also enable him, while doing full credit to the beauties and virtues of Plimlico, to point out that, here and there, as revealed by alternative experiments, even Plimlico may conceal somewhere a defect."

Now, the nuisance of all this notion of Business Education, of a training for certain trades, whether of plumber or plutocrat, is that they will *prevent* the intelligence being sufficiently active to criticize trade and business properly. They begin by stuffing the child, not with the sense of justice by which he can judge the world, but with the sense of inevitable doom or dedication by which he must accept that particular very wordly aspect of the world. Even while he is a baby he is a bank-clerk, and accepts the principles of banking which Mr. Joseph Finsbury so kindly explained to the banker. Even in the nursery he is an actuary or an accountant; he licks in numbers and the numbers come. But he cannot *criticize* the principles of banking, or entertain the intellectual fancy that the modern world is made to

turn too much on a Pythagorean worship of Numbers. But that is because he has never heard of the Pythagorean philosophy; or, indeed, of any other philosophy. He has never been taught to think, but only to count. He lives in a cold temple of abstract calculation, of which the pillars are columns of figures. But he has no basic sense of Comparative Religion (in the true sense of that tiresome phrase), by which he may discover whether he is in the right temple, or distinguish one temple from another. This is bad enough when we are dealing with the normal sense of number and quantity, the eternal foundations of rational and permanent commerce; which are in themselves as pure and abstract as Pythagoras. It becomes both preposterous and perilous when we are dealing with the mere scramble of speculation and economic illusion which is called business in America and elsewhere; with all its degrading publicity, with all its more dangerous secrecy. To begin a boy's training by teaching him to admire these things, and then call it Business Education, is exactly like teaching him to worship Baal and Baphomet, and then calling it Religious Education. And much of what is called commercial training is really of this character. Stevenson, with the assistance of Lloyd Osbourne (himself an American), gives a very vivid and amusing sketch of it in *The Wrecker*. His American hero very justly resents being laughed at merely because he leaves the *u* out of "colour"; but adds that his critics might have had a better case had they known that his father "had paid large sums to have him brought up in a gambling-hell."

Anyhow, that is what is the matter with Business Education; that it narrows the mind; whereas the

whole object of education is to broaden the mind; and especially to broaden it so as to enable it to criticize and condemn such narrowness. Everybody ought to learn first a general view of the history of man, of the nature of man, and (as I, for one, should add) of the nature of God. This may enable him to consider the rights and wrongs of slavery in a slave community, of cannibalism in a cannibal community, or of commerce in a commercial community. If he is immediately initiated into the mysteries of these institutions themselves, if he is sworn in infancy to take them as seriously as they take themselves, if he becomes a trader not only before he becomes a traveller, but even before he becomes a true citizen of his own town, he will never be able to denounce those institutions—or even to improve them. Such a state will never have the ideas or imagination to reform itself; and hustle and bustle and business activity will have resulted in the dead fixity of a fossil.

ON LOGIC AND LUNACY

THE idea of logic is so entirely lost in this phase of philosophical history, that even those who invoke it do so rather as the Athenians once invoked the Unknown God or the men of the Dark Ages retained a dim respect for Virgil as a conjurer. The very people who say, "be logical," will generally be found to be quite illogical in their own notion of logic. One of the last men who understood logic in its full and impartial sense, died only lately: the late William Johnson of King's College, Cambridge; one of the finest minds of the age and an exact measure of the modern contrast between notability and notoriety. I mean that somehow the glory has departed from glory, and the first men of the time often are the last men to be advertised or even adequately admired. He was as incapable of intellectual injustice as of infanticide; and while he and I differed about a thousand things, even if I had regarded his view as ultimately leading to falsehood, I should always have known that it was free from the faintest tinge of fallacy. If there had been any weed of weak logic in his own argument he would have torn it up with as much joy as any weed in the garden of the enemy. For he liked that sort of weeding as an amusement and an art—a sort of art for art's sake. And when I wander in the jungle of journalistic nonsense in which we all live to-day, his memory again and again returns.

Let us begin with a trifle that does not matter in the least. He loved to argue about trifles that do

not matter in the least. Some journalist the other day shook the foundation of the universe and the British Empire by raising the question of whether a girl ought to smoke a cigar. But what I noted about his, and about the hundred eager correspondents, who pursued this great theme, was that they wrote again and again some such sentence as this: "If you like a girl to smoke a cigarette, why can't you be logical and like her to smoke a cigar?" Now I do not care an ounce of shag whether she smokes a cigarette or a cigar or a corn-cob pipe or a hubble-bubble, or whether she smokes three cigars at once, or whether she is an Anti-Tobacco crank. But it is none the less true that when a man writes that sentence telling us to "be logical" he shows that he has never even heard of the nature of logic. He might just as well write: "You like the look of a horse: why won't you be logical and like the look of a hippopotamus?" The only answer is, "Well, I don't; and it is not illogical, because it does not in any way invade the realm of logic. A man has a perfect right to say that he likes the look of one thing and does not like the look of another thing; or even that he likes the look of a smaller thing, but does not like the look of a larger but somewhat similar thing. It is all a question of liking; and not in the least a question of logic. There is no logical compulsion upon him whatever to go on from the smaller to the larger and like them both. The man who uses this phrase attaches some queer particular meaning to the word "logical"; something that is dimly adumbrated in the words "extremist" or "going the whole hog." But if my appetite is so small that I only require half a hog for breakfast, I am not any less of a logician because I refuse to eat

the whole hog for breakfast. The obligation to eat the whole hog, if it exists, must be a mystical or moral or transcendental obligation; but it is not a logical obligation. It is not logical, because it has not been deduced from any premises; it has simply been stated without reference to any premises.

And that is what is the matter with the modern man who says "be logical." He cannot take his own advice, and therefore he cannot state his own first principles. But though his logic is nonsense as he states it, it does refer to some first principles if he could only state them. It all depends on the *reason* for approving of cigarettes or cigars or girls or any other strange creatures. What he really means, at the back of his muddled modernistic mind, is something like this: "If I approve of Jennifer smoking a cigarette because Jennifer can jolly well do anything she likes, and does, *then* it is illogical in me to object to her liking a cigar; or for that matter an opium-pipe or a pint of laudanum or a bottle of prussic acid." And this statement would be really quite logical, because the logical reason is given. Or if he said, "It is my first principle that women may do anything that men do; *therefore* I am bound in logic to pass the cigars to my daughter as much as to my son," then that also is perfectly reasonable as the application of a stated principle. But to say that a man is bound in logic to like a cigar as much as a cigarette whether in his own mouth or that of his maiden aunt or his maternal grandmother, is stark staring unreason; and shows that the speaker is entirely illogical in dealing with the two ideas of liking and logic.

This half superstitious veneration for logic, combined with a complete misunderstanding of it,

is very common in those popular works of fiction which are the joy of my existence; the crime novels and the police romances and the rest. There is a queer notion that the detective, who is distinguished from all human beings by having the gift of reason, is bound in logic not to like anything or anybody. Even Sherlock Holmes (the friend of my childhood to whom I shall always pay a tribute of piety) is described somewhere, I think, as being incapable of falling in love because of his logical nature. You might as well say that he could not be expected to have much appetite for lunch, because of his proficiency in mathematics. There is nothing intrinsically illogical in having affections or admirations or appetites, so long as we recognize them reasonably as what they are. But the romantic tradition, as it exists in all the romances, is that the logician cannot be romantic. It may be remarked that the word "cold" will always be found coupled with the word "logical"; I imagine the printers keep such words together in one block of type. But the cold logician, though he must not be romantic, is almost entirely a creature of romance. As a matter of fact and experience, most of the very logical people I have known have been very warm-blooded, affectionate or enthusiastic people. Most of the very good debaters were very warm debaters. Some of the closest reasoners in history were men of the most enthusiastic convictions; like St. Thomas Aquinas or the great French preachers and orators. The truth is, I think, that it was because the English were originally taught to have a prejudice against logic, that even when they half overcame the prejudice, there remained something alien in the admiration. They could be brought to feel a sort of

awe in the presence of a really reasonable person; as if he were a sort of monster. The fact that a man could think could only be explained on the hypothesis that he was Martian or the Man in the Moon; that he was a Clockwork Man; that he was The Thinking Machine. They began by thinking that reason is inhuman; and only gradually conceded that it is superhuman.

Is it not about time somebody preached the older doctrine; that reason is human? Is there not something to be said for those mediæval Schoolmen and antiquated sages, who held that man is a rational animal; and even more rational than the other animals? The modern experiment of first sneering at logic for not being a practical thing, and then timidly praising it for being a priggish thing, seems to have resulted in the general loss of it as a normal function of the mind. It is as if the same Victorian English had supported their railway-trains by forbidding anybody to walk; and then, when all human limbs were paralysed, had deified two or three athletes as gods because they had the power of walking. Logic is as normal as legs; but legs can be neglected as well as logic. All that is needed is a little ordinary training and practice; the knowledge that inferences rest on their first principles, as men rest on their feet. But without it the world seems to be drifting into an intellectual dissolution and destruction, which is at its very wildest when some wild voice shrieks out of the chaos; "Be logical." This strange cry apparently means that you cannot stroke a cat without stroking a tiger; or that you are bound to wish the house was on fire because you sit by the fireside.

ON SIGHTSEEING

I HAVE often done my best to consider, in various aspects, what is really the matter with Sightseeing. Or rather, I hope, I have done my best to consider what is the matter with me, when I find myself faintly fatigued by Sightseeing. For it is always wiser to consider not so much why a thing is not enjoyable, as why we ourselves do not enjoy it. In the case of Sightseeing, I have only got so far as to be quite certain that the fault is not in the Sights and is not in the Sightseers. This would seem to drive the speculative philosopher back upon the dreadful and shocking conclusion that the fault is entirely in me. But, before accepting so destructive a deduction, I think there are some further modifications to be made and some further distinctions to be drawn.

The mere fact that a mob is going to see a monument ought not in itself to depress any imaginative and sympathetic mind. On the contrary, such a mind ought to perceive that there is something of the same mystery or majesty in the mob as in the monument. It is a weakness to fail in feeling that a statue standing on a pedestal above a street, the statue of a hero, carved by an artist, for the honour and glory of a city, is, so far as it goes, a marvellous and impressive work of man. But it is far more of a weakness to fail in feeling that a hundred statues walking about the street, alive with the miracle of a mysterious vitality are a marvellous and impressive work of God. In so far as that ultimate argument

affects the matter, the sightseer might almost as well travel to see the sightseers as to see the sights. There are, of course, vulgar and repulsive sightseers. There are, for that matter, vulgar and repulsive statues. But this cannot be a complete excuse for my own lamentable coldness; for I have felt it creeping over me in the presence of the most earnest and refined sightseers, engaged in inspecting the most classical and correct statues. Indeed (if I must make the disgraceful confession in the interests of intellectual discovery), I will own that I have felt this mysterious wave of weariness pass over me rather *more* often when the elegant and distinguished Archdeacon was explaining the tombs to the Guild of Golden Thoughts than when an ordinary shouting showman was showing them to a jolly rabble of trippers with beer bottles and concertinas. I am very much troubled with this unnatural insensibility of mind; and I have made many attempts, none of them quite successful, to trace my mental malady to its origin. But I am not sure that some hint of the truth may not be found in the first popular example that I gave—the example of a statue standing in a street.

Now, men have stuck up statues in streets as part of the general and ancient instinct of popular monumental art, which they exhibited in erecting pillars, building pyramids, making monoliths and obelisks, and such things, from the beginning of the world. And the conception may be broadly stated thus—that this sort of sight was meant for two different kinds of sightseers. First, the monument was meant to be seen accidentally; it was actually set up purposely in order to be seen accidentally. In other words, a striking tower on a hill, an arresting

statue on a pedestal, a remarkable relief over an archway, or any other piece of public art, was intended for the traveller, and even especially for the chance traveller. It was meant for the passer-by, perhaps in the hope that he would not merely pass by; perhaps in the hope that he would pause, and possibly even meditate. But he would be meditating not only on something that he had never seen before, but on something that he had never expected to see. The statue would almost spring out upon him like a stage brigand. The archway would arrest him and almost bar his path like a barricade. He would suddenly see the high tower like a sort of signal: like a rocket suddenly sent up to convey a message, and almost a warning. This is the way in which many popular monuments have been seen; and this, some may agree with me in thinking, is pretty much the best way to see them. No man will ever forget the sights he really saw when he was not a sightseer. Every man remembers the thing that struck him like the thunderbolt of an instant, though it had stood there waiting for him as the memorial of an æon. But, whether or no this be the best way of treating popular memorials, it is not the only way, and certainly has not been the only popular way. Historic relics, as a whole, have been treated differently in history as a whole. But, in history as a whole, the other way of seeing such sights was not what we commonly call sightseeing.

We might put the point this way: that the two ways of visiting the statue or the shrine were the way of the Traveller and the way of the Pilgrim. But the way of the Pilgrim almost always involved the way of the Pilgrimage. It was a ritual or ceremonial way: the way of a procession which

had indeed come to see that shrine, but had not come to see anything else. The pilgrim does not feel, as the tourist does often quite naturally feel, that he has had his tour interrupted by something that does not happen to interest him. The pilgrimage must interest him, or he would never have been a pilgrim. He knows exactly what he wants to do; and, what is perhaps even more valuable, he knows for certain when he has done it. He cannot be dragged on from one thing to another; from one thing that interests him mildly to another thing that bores him stiff. He has undertaken a certain expedition with a certain logical end: an end both in the sense of a purpose and in the sense of a termination. For a certain mystical reason of his own he wanted to visit a certain monument or shrine; and, now he has visited it, he is free to visit the nearest public-house or any other place he pleases.

But all this is altered, because we have passed from the age of monuments to the age of museums. We have been afflicted with the modern idea of collecting all sorts of totally different things, with totally different types of interest, including a good many of no apparent interest at all, and stuffing them all into one building, that the stranger may stray among a hundred distracting monuments or the pilgrim be lost among a hundred hostile shrines. When the traveller saw the statue of the hero, he did not see written on the pedestal: "This way to the Collection of Tropical Fungi," in which he possibly felt no interest at all. When the pilgrim found his way to the shrine, he did not find that the priest was eagerly waving him on to a glass case filled with the specimens of local earthworms. Fungi and earthworms may be, and indeed are, exceedingly

interesting things in themselves; but they are not things which men seek in the same mood which sends them to look at the statues of heroes or the shrines of saints. With the establishment of that entirely modern thing, the Museum, we have a new conception, which, like so many modern conceptions, is based on a blunder in psychology and a blindness to the true interests of culture. The Museum is not meant either for the wanderer to see by accident or for the pilgrim to see with awe. It is meant for the mere slave of a routine of self-education to stuff himself with every sort of incongruous intellectual food in one indigestible meal. It is meant for the mere Sightseer, the man who must see all the sights.

Of course, I am only speaking of this kind of sight as it affects this kind of sightseer. I do not deny that museums and galleries and other collections serve a more serious purpose for specialists who can select special things. But the modern popular practice of which I complain is bad, not because it is popular, but because it is modern. It was not made by any of the ancestral instincts of mankind; either the instinct that erected the crucifix by the wayside, to arrest the wayfarer, or the instinct that erected the crucifix in the cathedral to be the goal of the worshipper. It is not a product of popular imagination, but of what is called popular education; the cold and compulsory culture which is not, and never will be, popular.

ON THE TEUTONIC THEORY

EVERYBODY knows, or ought to know, that making a universal theory about human society is the easiest thing in the world. The reason is not always so apparent, but I think there is a reason which can be stated rationally. The logical weakness in this sort of superficial social theory is this: that the social values are not fixed like mathematical values, and can themselves be moulded to fit the theory. If I say that red-haired men are always the tallest men in the world, I can probably be very rapidly refuted; because measuring men with a six-foot rule is a matter of mathematical fact. But if I say that red-haired men are always the men who sway the destinies of the world, I can always make out a case, by taking all the red-haired men who were important and making them out more important than they were. I can invent an ingenious theory that it was William Rufus rather than William the Conqueror who really confirmed the Norman monarchy which became the English nation. I shall have an easier task in showing that Henry the Second, the first Plantagenet, really was a great man who in some sense ruled a great empire. I can argue that General James Wolfe, who (I believe) had red hair, was the greatest of England's heroes, by arguing that Canada is really the greatest of England's possessions. I can say that the only man who really influenced the intellectual life of our time was Bernard Shaw. I might make out quite a good case; but my motive is merely in the fact that

Mr. Shaw had a red beard, not so very long ago; though presumably he has grown less wise as he has grown more white. But the point is that I must maintain the general proposition of his wisdom; and I may find myself committed to defending a large number of rather extraordinary propositions, normally remote from my own mental habits; not through a disinterested conviction that Mr. Shaw is wise as well as witty, but because I am committed to a general dogma that the red-haired man is always right.

It will be well illustrated in the case of Queen Elizabeth, a topic almost as controversial as Bernard Shaw. For the sake of my theory, I must cling desperately to the old-fashioned view that I was taught at school; the theory that the red-haired Queen Bess' was a sort of tawny lioness of royal magnanimity and heroic religious convictions, shaking the earth with her roarings on behalf of the Reformation. I must not listen to the later and more realistic historians, who tell us that Elizabeth was personally an invalid and politically very much of a tool; that her real religious attachments are very doubtful, and her external political actions mostly forced on her by Cecil and his gang. In the ordinary way, I might be quite indifferent, and therefore quite impartial. But I must fight to the death for the old theory of the Froude and Freeman period; not so much for the cause of the lady as for the colour of her hair. I need her for my general plan of painting the map red; or, rather, of tying it up in red hair instead of red tape. This is how it happens that perverse and pedantic fancies so often harden into fanaticism among professors and professional historians. They will

maintain any paradox rather than lose any point that supports their pet generalization, even if they do not personally care very much about the point itself. There was a mediæval tradition that Judas had red hair; and this sort of don would not shrink from saying that Judas and not Jesus was the real founder of Christianity.

I may seem to dwell on an arbitrary and absurd example. But it is not so. I myself grew up under the gigantic shadow of the Teutonic Theory. It was essentially a theory that everything valuable had been done by fair-haired men, which is quite as ludicrous as the same assertion about red-haired men. But I am not now interested in attacking that theory, or any other theory. I only remark that such theories, whether true or false, do affect the truthfulness of historians, and more often in the direction of falsehood than of truth. When we find professors quibbling and quarrelling about the number of men living on a farm mentioned in Domesday Book, or the terms of a dispatch sent to a French marshal before the Battle of Arcola, we may be pretty certain that, though these are the things about which they are quibbling, they are not the things about which they are quarrelling. There lies behind some much larger quarrel about some much larger theory; probably some theory about the religion of the Middle Ages or the motives of the French Revolution. History and sociology can never be 'scientific' in the sense of subject to exact measurement, because there is always the mystery and doubt inherent in moral evidence affecting one half of the equation, and generally both. In the thesis that red-haired men are great men, there are shades of difference even in red hair,

and infinite shades of difference in greatness or the pretence of greatness. And not a few modern theorists seem to me to be strangely lacking in the instinct of what is really great.

It is amusing to notice how these theories pursue each other, and how the last almost always devours and destroys the last but one. Generally, in fact, the last is the flat contradiction of the last but one. Generally they are equally extreme, equally exaggerated, and, so far, equally untrue. For instance, the general theory implied in a book like *The Outline of History* is that the outline is a continuous and ascending line, a single upward curve with very few breaks in it. I do not mean that the author denies decay and reaction, but that the main moral he would like to draw is that the host of humanity has advanced, with a few halts, along the high road of history. Above all, he implies a human unity, and the idea that the host that has halted is the same as the host that has advanced. I think myself that he greatly exaggerates this continuity; leans too heavily on the alleged links, and especially misses the missing links. He makes the amoeba and the anthropoid much nearer to us than they really are. At the same time, he makes the ancient Greek or the mediæval Christian much more inferior to us than they really are. He makes the progress too recent, too rapid, and too clear. For instance, he assumes that the mediæval idea of education was inferior to ours, simply because it involved the teaching of a positive philosophy. But there is something to be said for the idea of teaching everything to somebody, as compared with the modern notion of teaching nothing, and the same sort of nothing, to everybody. For what we force on all

families, by the power of the police, is not a philosophy but the art of reading and writing unphilosophically. I am not, however, contesting the world-theory of Mr. Wells at this moment. I am only contrasting the world-theory of Mr. Wells with the world theory which instantly followed it across the world.

For the next thing we heard was that all Europe and America were full of a new fuss made about the general theory of a German writer, whose whole point was that human history was *not* continuous, and *not* progressive, and *not* a thing presenting points of comparison between one stage and another. According to this new theory, there is only a series of closed cycles of different cultures, so separate that they can hardly be compared. We may say that there is no progress, but only progresses. We might almost say that there is no history, but only histories. When the Greek and Roman culture commonly called Antiquity had ended, it broke off without any bridge connecting it with the mediæval or the modern. It is the fossil of a lost world, and no more of a lesson to us than a pterodactyl to a bird-fancier or Eohippus to a horse-breeder. Now, this also is certainly a gross exaggeration. There is a great deal more continuity, and in that sense a great deal more progress, than is allowed for in that historical theory. For instance, nobody understands the Middle Ages without realizing that the mind of Aristotle was still labouring in its midst like a mighty mill; and it is absurd to say that Augustine and Aquinas were not parts of the same continuous communion. But what interests me is not the truth or falsehood of the first or second theory. It is that they so flatly contradict each other, and that they

so rapidly followed each other. And I fall back on my first reflection: that theories of that sort must be rather easy to make up—if you leave out more than half the facts.

ON LITERARY CLIQUES

MANY are complaining of the cliques in the literary world; and they are right for a particular reason, though I am not sure that they know it. The discontent, like so many of the present discontents, has a certain disadvantage; that it does not distinguish between the normal nuisances of human life and the special nuisances of modern life. Under no conditions should we all be equally in touch with each other, or distributing dispassionate justice to every human being like a Day of Judgment. It is natural for men to belong to a club, as it is natural for other men who do not belong to a club to call it a clique; and a great deal of what is called log-rolling is as easy as falling off a log. I have generally found that it was precisely because a man was generously and enthusiastically rolling the log of a friend that he complained so bitterly of the log-rolling among his enemies. But I am not forbidden to find that a writer is intelligent, even if he is my friend. I am permitted, perhaps, the vanity of supposing that he is my friend because he is intelligent; or at least that he became my friend partly because I thought he was intelligent. The relation is obviously open to abuse; and the method which I myself have always chosen is to praise the merit of a friend's public work as warmly as I felt inclined, but always to mention the private friendship as well as the public merit. Then anybody is free to discount it, if he thinks it ought to be discounted. But there is

another and more neglected evil in the clique; in the club that cultivates some special variety in culture. The artists of such a group have a tendency not only to talk shop, but to talk workshop. They talk more about methods of production than about products of perfection. Like talkative art-students, they show each other their work before it is finished; and like lazy art-students, they often find this an excellent excuse for not finishing it at all.

Perfect work is for the world; yes, for the stupid world. Imperfect work is for the class, for the club, for the clique; in a word for the sympathisers. We show our worst efforts to the intelligent; we reserve our best efforts for the dull—that is, for the supreme and sacred duty of all creative expression; that of being sufficiently pointed to pierce at last even the mind of the dull. For whatever be the nature of creation, it is certainly of the nature of translation; it is translating something from the dumb alphabet and dim infantile secret language in our own souls into the totally different public language that we talk with our tongues. If that translation were perfect, if the ideas and idioms did really correspond correctly, it would all be as plain to the man in the street as to the man in the club. It certainly would not be necessary to show it in fragmentary hints to the man in the clique. But because our expression is imperfect we need friendship to fill up the imperfections. A man of our own type or tastes will understand our meaning before it is expressed; certainly a long time before it is perfectly expressed. Thus we rather tend to lose the old idea that it is the business of the author to explain himself. We tend to adopt the idea that it is the business of the clique to understand the

author; and even to explain the author, when he refuses to explain himself.

A famous aesthete of the 'nineties said that the poet who was admired by poets must be the greatest of poets. I will take the liberty to doubt it. I fancy that in such a case the poets are in fact collaborating with the poet. The beauty they behold in his work is partly their work as well as his. Just as the poets may see more than others see in every bush or cloud so they may see more than others see in every epithet or metaphor. Above all, if they are poets of his own particular school of poetry, they will guess something of what he means by the queerest epithet or the maddest metaphor. But it does not follow that those words are the full and perfect expression of what he means; if they were, they probably would not seem mad or even queer. In short, the poet has not really travelled the whole of his pilgrimage from Paradise to Putney (with apologies to the ghost of Swinburne); an embassy of select and fastidious souls of Putney has gone out and met him half-way. He has not performed the full literary function of translating living thoughts into literature. He still needs an interpreter; and a crowd of interpreters has officiously rushed between the poet and the public. The crowd is the clique; and it does do a certain amount of harm, I think, by thus intercepting the true process of the perfecting of human expression. It is not wrong because it encourages the great man to talk. It is wrong because it actually discourages the great man from talking plainly. The priests and priestesses of the temple take a pride in the oracle remaining oracular. That vast but vague revolution that we call the modern world largely began about the time

when men demanded that the Scriptures should be translated into English. It has ended in a time when nobody dares to demand that English poets should be translated into English. It has ended in a new race of pedants who are only too proud of reading the poet in the original, and merely murmur as they read, in a tantalizing fashion, that the original is so very original.

This is the paradox of the clique; that it consists of those who understand something and do not wish it to be understood; do not really wish it to be understandable. But such a group must in its nature be small, and its tendency is to make the range or realm of culture smaller. It consists of those who happen to be near enough to some unique or perverse mentality to guess that a man means something that as yet he cannot really say; just as a detective might be legitimately proud of having extracted some sort of valuable evidence from a lunatic who was deaf and dumb. But this does not make for the enlargement of the poet's power of expression or the public's power of appreciation. The ideal condition is that the poet should put his meaning more and more into the language of the people, and that the people should enjoy more and more of the meaning of the poet. That is true popular education; and, if we really possessed that sort, we should hardly need any other. One party in the quarrel will insist that the public ought to take more trouble to understand the poet; and so it ought. But the other party can answer that the poet should take more trouble to finish his poems; and so he should. It is not a question of petty or conventional or finicking finish. It is a question of not leaving three-quarters of the poem inside the

poet with the rest of it hanging out, generally tail-foremost.

At present, even good poets often do not write good poems, but rather notes for poems. They think it enough to record, as in a sort of disjointed diary, that they *did* feel a sense of poignant futility on seeing an old hat on a deserted hat-peg; or an indescribable surge of rebellion on observing a broken vase in a suburban dust-bin. And then comes the sympathetic critic, saying (no doubt quite truly) that he can imagine a man shuddering at the hat-peg or shedding tears into the dust-bin. But that is only saying that one individual can imagine the imagination. It is not completely communicating the imagination by means of the image. I am far from denying that a great poet might achieve a great turn of style, which would make something sublime out of a hat-peg or a dust-bin, as Shakespeare did out of a bodkin or a bung-hole. But if such passages be examined, it will be found that nowhere did the great poet study the grand style more subtly than when dealing with such mean objects. Anyhow, he did not merely mention the mean objects, and then mention that they had filled him with feelings indescribable. He set out seriously to describe the indescribable. That is the whole business of literature, and it is a hard row to hoe.

ON THE SIMPLICITY OF ASIA

I WAS recently asked to write a prologue to a composite detective story, which demanded a detailed and vivid description of the streets of Hong Kong. I have never seen Hong Kong and I have not the least notion of what it looks like. But he would be a very faint-hearted journalist who should allow himself to be restrained from realism and photographic exactitude by a trifle like that. But, in the course of considering the matter, I fell into a more general train of thought, to which Hong Kong serves as a gate of entry, as it serves as a gate of entry to China. Though I have never seen the mixed cosmopolitan ports of the Far East, I have seen some of the yet more mixed and cosmopolitan ports of the Near East. I have been in Port Said and Suez; and between these and Hong Kong lies the whole vast and still partly unknown thing that we call Asia. But my meditations have overflowed upon this page, because they are obviously too vague and general to be developed before the innocent and happy spirits full of a beautiful eagerness to get on with the murder.

Whatever else the scribes have written about Asia, they have all agreed in the statement that it is mysterious. It may seem perverse to say that this statement is a mis-statement, or even that it is an over-statement. Yet I think there is an aspect in which it can be contradicted. We may even say that the whole point of Asia is that it is not mysterious; not half so mysterious as Europe; to say nothing

of America, which is the most mysterious of all. By which I mean that there are in Europe and America compromises and complexities, a blend or balance of one thing with another, which is really rather less apparent in the stark passions, the strict rituals, and the ancient appetites of Asia. For instance, a Christian is perpetually balanced between a Christian ideal of loving his enemies, a Pagan ideal of punishing his enemies, and a chivalric ideal of only fighting his enemies fairly. In Asia, I imagine, both love and hate have been much more unmixed and undisguised. Both in poetry and in policy, a man would be much more simple in his purpose to pursue his love or to persecute his foe. And, while there is truth in the tradition that the Asiatic has thus sometimes become an artist in sensuality and an artist in cruelty, he might well make out a case for the view that he was an artist with less artifice and more sincerity. Somebody said, with considerable truth, that Russia lacks the cement of hypocrisy. This might well be quoted to support the not uncommon view that Russia is a part of Asia.

It might be said that Asia is too old to be mysterious. It might at least be said that Asia is too old to be hypocritical. There are a thousand veils and disguises; but the disguises have worn very thin in thousands of years, and the veils are rather like the veils worn by loose women in Cairo and Port Said: ritual, but transparent. Those who would give a juvenile thrill by combining the occult and the obscene do still talk about the Mysteries of the Harem; the secrets behind the veils and curtains of the scraglio. But I imagine there is a very little mystery about the harem, at any rate the Moslem harem; and no secret except the open secret. I

imagine that the sentiments of the seraglio, whether domestic or servile or sensual, are often dull to that extreme point of dullness which the revolutionary West describes as respectable. I suspect that there is far more mystery, in the sense of mysticism, in the feelings of two common lovers in an English lane. It is only fair to add that, with all the ceremonial of reticence or invisibility, there is probably much less cant than there is in many an English novel or newspaper. But, whether it be subtlety or sophistry, whether it be hypocrisy or only human complexity, it is really in the West and not in the East that there is the mystery. The Occidental is always saying that he cannot understand the Oriental; but the truth is that he cannot understand himself. It is the Christian culture that is woven of many strands, of many fabrics and colours, and twisted into the single knot, the knot that holds the world together, but the knot that is of all knots the most difficult to trace out or untie. Compared with that, there is something simple and smooth and all of a piece about the ancient silks of China or the peasant weaving of India. It is on the head of the Christian that the ends of the earth are come, even from the beginning, the arrows of the Persians or the stone clubs of the Celts. And if the eyelids are, after all, less weary than those of a Buddha or a Brahmin god, it may be that there is a slight fallacy in the familiar quotation, and that being hit on the head incessantly by the corners of the world does not merely send one to sleep. Anyhow, it is the Christian who is the real cosmic mystery; the cross made by the cross-lights of the shafts of the sunrise and the sunset; the true crux of the world. But it is only just to say that this complexity, which

produces the highest philosophy, does also produce humbug. It produces the worst kind; in which the humbug hardly knows he is a humbug. I suspect that there is far less humbug in the East, and that, compared with such rooted and humanized humbug, all its cunning is a sort of simplicity.

In Asia things have worn too thin to be padded with such self-deception; it is old and its bones stick out. There the harlot is a harlot, and not a society actress whom the divorce court hands from one rich man to another. There the slave is a slave, and not a scheduled employee having less than the income nominated in the Act. There the king is a king, and the tyrant is a tyrant, and not a banker threatening to make nations bankrupt, or a private person holding all the shares in a public company. We have doubtless by our example introduced these blessings into Asia, but they are not Asiatic. There the usurer was a usurer, and the thief a thief; and this, which was the best thing about Asia, will probably be the one thing really altered by the influence of Europe. But it is worth while to say a word for the simplicity of Asia, and against the mystery of Asia. For on that supposed mystery of the East there has been erected every sort of quackery in the West. Every sham religion, every shabby perversion, every blackguard secret society, has claimed to feed on the strange fruits of that garden of Asia. And we may well hint that the garden itself is a little more decent, even if it is a desert.

There are any number of examples, both good and evil, of the sort of rigid simplicity that I mean, and the sense in which the Orient has more simplicity than secrecy. The Caste System of India, for instance, seems to me to be a tyranny; and the

worst sort of tyranny, which is not conducted by a tyrant, but by an aristocracy: but it is not a hypocrisy. It is not even that more confused and unconscious sort of hypocrisy that we call humbug. It is not confused at all; its very cruelty is in its clarity. You cannot play about with the idea of a Brahmin as you can with the idea of a Gentleman. You cannot pretend that Pariahs were made Pariahs entirely as a compliment to them, and in the interests of True Democracy. At least, if the Indians are talking like that now, it is only too true that they have been infected with the worst vices of the West. I wish I were sure they were also being influenced by the real merits of the West; and, above all, by this great merit of the West, the name of which is Mystery. But it is they, the simple, who do not understand us, the mystical. A brilliant and distinguished Hindu told me that the problem of the world is to unite all things; that the things in which they differ are indifferent, and only that things in which they are the same are solid. I could not explain to him that the problem of the Christian is not merely to unite all things, but to unite union with disunion. The differences are not indifferent; and the problem is to let things differ while they agree. In short, the Western man seeks after Liberty, which is a real mystery. Compared with that Unity is a platitude. It is the White Man who is the Dark Horse; and ourselves who are riddles to ourselves.

ON FICTIONAL CONVENTIONS

IT is now much discussed among the learned whether art should abolish morality by calling it convention. It might well be discussed among the wise whether art should even abolish convention. But what seems very queer to me is this: that modern art has so often abolished morality without abolishing convention. I mean that very tame and timid conventions, the remains of rather fragile and artificial styles of writing, do still manage to run side by side with complete licence or laxity about much more important things. It seems as if people could get rid of the commandments, but not of the conventions. I will give only one small example, which has struck me again and again in reading the most modern novels.

In those modern novels there are types of women, and descriptions of women, which might have brought a blush to the cheek of Petronius or been considered a little too coarse for the refinement of Rabelais. But in those descriptions there are still certain conventions, really unreal conventions, exactly as they were in the Victorian works of Miss Porter or Miss Procter. Again and again, the modern reader may read a sentence like this: "Peter had already noticed a smiling, blue-eyed girl, with a bright, shingled head, slip in among the newcomers, suspected of being gate-crashers, who thronged the door." Or the sentence may run: "Slim, lithe, and brown-eyed, with a delicate and fiery tan, Joan stood poised on the distant rock,

about to dive." There are a hundred other examples; but all habitually assume that the first thing that anybody notices about a woman is the colour of her eyes. Now, it is perfectly possible to be on tolerably intimate terms with a person for a long time and yet to be quite unable to recall suddenly the colour of his or her eyes. And certainly nobody ever saw the colour of a stranger's eyes all the way across a ballroom in Mayfair, a big studio in Chelsea, or the wide sands of the Lido. One would suppose that a girl's blue eyes were enormously big blue lanterns, and shone afar off like the green and red lanterns of a railway signal. That one little sentimental trick or tradition makes hundreds of literary descriptions of human beings ring quite false, and the most lavish and generous supply of general moral barbarism and baseness cannot wholly make up the loss.

What a man sees first about a woman, or anybody else, is the type; whether it is, for instance, the type that flows in long lines, with long features, the type that an artist would draw in profile; or whether it has the face that is most itself when seen fully in front, flat against a background; especially the sort of square and open face, the face that is generally that of a fighter, and, however beautiful it may be, has always a touch of the monkey. A man can distinguish those two types from each other across the largest hall or the widest sands, almost as easily as he could distinguish a horse from a cow or a stag. He might distinguish a hundred things about the rank or the culture or even the character; he could make inferences from the poise and the walk and the gesture. He could do it all at a distance, at which it would be as impossible to see blue eyes in the girl's

head as to see blue stones in the girl's engagement ring. Yet I have seen that little artificiality of description a hundred times in a day's reading, in turning over the tales even of able and ambitious modern novelists. It is a small matter; indeed, it is the point that it is a small matter; it is too small to be seen, and yet it is always reported. But it happens to illustrate a curious sort of concealed convention that runs underneath much modern writing that considers itself most unconventional. In more showy things the realists remember to be shameless; but in these little things they do not remember to be realistic.

I knew a lady, with a very hearty sense of humour, whose business it happened to be to write frankly conventional romances for the old frankly conventional Press, the Press that provided healthy but somewhat sentimental serials and novelettes. She got great fun out of her functions; and she told me once that she had written a long serial romance, with a stately and tragic heroine, only to be told at the end that the public, or at least the publishers, insisted on a *petite* and sparkling heroine. With a noble calm, disdaining to alter a single incident in the narrative, she merely went through the whole manuscript, altering black eyes to blue eyes. When she came to the line, "He gazed into Amanda's dark, unfathomable eyes," she merely crossed out the adjectives and wrote "blue and sparkling" on the top. Of course, it was not all a matter of eyes; she had to make some modification about dress and demeanour. Where she had written "Amanda swept across the lawn," the alteration of one word made it "Amanda tripped across the lawn." That, by the way, is another of the old conventions that

linger even in the new unconventionality. Girls still sometimes trip in the grimmest realistic studies. Novelists still sometimes trip over that antiquated booby trap. I never saw anybody trip, except somebody who tripped over a hassock and fell on his nose, to the satiric enlivenment of the human race. Anyhow, Amanda's large and shady hat grew less large and shady, and was turned up with a rose or something; her raiment grew less sweeping and severe; but nothing else needed any alteration. And it sometimes seems to me that many who write in the most revolutionary fashion write quite as much according to a revolutionary formula. They merely go through their own story and put in the terms which are supposed to make the heroine chic or distinguished, according to the momentary modern conventions of unconventionality. The heroine has no more real individuality, amid all the fuss of individualism, than the adaptable Amanda whose eyes turned so easily from black to blue.

Perhaps what we call realistic descriptions are bound to be conventional because they are bound to be fashionable. They are bound to emphasize exactly the points which one particular period thinks important; which will be exactly the points which the next period will think unimportant. Hence we have the paradox that the noblest compliments to women have not been direct descriptions, but indirect descriptions. The direct compliment would deal with all the details that pass; the indirect compliment with the impression which does not pass. Archaeologists have worked out a complete theory of the costume of Helen of Troy, which seems to have consisted of a straw sun-bonnet, a Zouave jacket, and high-heeled shoes. If Homer

had written a realistic description, it would have seemed to us a rather vulgar description. The dress of the fourteenth century was more dignified, but not more natural; and if Dante had described Beatrice in the exact garb she wore it might have seemed to us at once extravagant and stiff. But ages shall pass and civilizations shall perish, and time shall never turn the keen edge of that great indirect compliment, that older and wiser fashion of describing the effect and not the external instruments. As when Dante, seeing his lady upon the height, felt only like the legendary monster whom the taste of a strange food had turned into a god. Or Homer was content to let us listen to the grumbling of the Trojans against the cause of the Trojan War, and then to that great sudden silence that fell upon them, full of light and understanding, when Helen came forth upon the wall.

ON THE PRISON OF JAZZ

I HAVE already remarked, with all the restraint that I could command, that of all modern phenomena, the most monstrous and ominous, the most manifestly rotting with disease, the most grimly prophetic of destruction, the most clearly and unmistakably inspired by evil spirits, the most instantly and awfully overshadowed by the wrath of heaven, the most near to madness and moral chaos, the most vivid with devilry and despair, is the practice of having to listen to loud music while eating a meal in a restaurant. It has in it that sort of distraction that is worse than dissipation. For, though we talk lightly of doing this or that to distract the mind, it remains really as well as verbally true that to be distracted is to be distraught. The original Latin word does not mean relaxation; it means being torn asunder as by wild horses. The original Greek word, which corresponds to it, is used in the text which says that Judas burst asunder in the midst. To think of one thing at a time is the best sort of thinking; but it is possible, in a sense, to think of two things at a time, if one of them is really subconscious and therefore really subordinate. But to deal with a second thing which by its very nature thrust itself more and more aggressively in front of the first thing is to find the very crux of psychological crucifixion. I have generally found that the refined English persons who think it idolatrous to contemplate a religious image, turn up next time full of delighted admiration of some Yogi or Esoteric

ON THE PRISON OF JAZZ

Hindu who only contemplates his big toe. But at least he contemplates something, and does not have to have ten thousand brazen drums to encourage him to do it. He is so far a real philosopher, in spite of his philosophy. He does not try to do two incompatible things at once.

Some social gestures have been found compatible with social intercourse by that very practical psychology which is as old as the world. Drinking is a help to talking; eating may be indulged in with due moderation and proportion; smoking is also a subconscious and therefore soothing pleasure. But talking to people who are listening to something else which is not the talk is a sort of complex or nexus of futility. To listen to a loud noise which is noisy enough to make speech inaudible, and not noisy enough to make silence conventional, is a strangling cross-purposes of contradiction. Also, as I have often pointed out, it is rude to everybody concerned. It is as if I went to hear Paderewski or Kreisler, at a concert, and started to spread out an elegant supper in front of me, with oysters and pigeon-pie and champagne, coffee and liqueurs. One is an insult to the cook and the other to the musician; but both would be an insult to a companion who had come under the impression that he was to enjoy himself under normal and traditional conditions; of attention during the performance of a concert, or conversation during the progress of a dinner. Sometimes a guest is actually described as being invited to "a quiet dinner." It is rather a quaint phrase when one considers it; as implying that the dinner itself could be noisy; that the soup would roar like the sea, or the asparagus become talkative, or the mutton-chop shriek aloud like the

mandrake. But it does bear witness to the normal conception of comfort; that a quiet dinner means a quiet talk. Why, then, should two people walk into the middle of an enormous noise in order to have a quiet talk?

Nevertheless, in contradiction of all my present remarks, in violation of all my principles, I did actually the other day pay some attention to the band that was playing in a restaurant. For one thing, the nightmare of noise, recalling the horns of hell rather than the horns of elfland, is generally accompanied by that undercurrent of battering monotony which I believe is supposed to be one of the charms of jazz. And, without professing to know much about music, I have formed a very strong impression about jazz. It does express something; and what it expresses is Slavery. That is why the same sort of thrill can be obtained by the throb of savage tom-toms, in music or drama connected with the great slave-land of Africa. Jazz is the very reverse of an expression of liberty, or even an excessive expression of liberty, or even an expression of licence. It is the expression of the pessimist idea that nature never gets beyond nature, that life never rises above life, that man always finds himself back where he was at the beginning, that there is no revolt, no redemption, no escape for the slaves of the earth and of the desires of the earth. There is any amount of pessimistic poetry on that theme that is thrilling enough in its own way; and doubtless the music on that theme can be thrilling also. But it cannot be liberating, or even loosening; it does not escape as a common or vulgar melody can escape. It is the Song of the Treadmill. I had grown sufficiently used to the dull roar of it, in

ON THE PRISON OF JAZZ

such places, that it did not prevent me from thinking, even if it did prevent me from talking. And then, of a sudden, the musicians began to play the tunes of a particular pre-War period, which was more or less the period of my own early youth. Most of them were quite cheap tunes attached to quite silly songs. But they were tunes and they were songs. And therefore they expressed something which has hitherto been the secret of man, and the whole meaning of his position in nature: they expressed Liberty.

For that is exactly the paradox of the transformation that has taken place. The old popular tune was banal, but it was free. Its rhythm was not only repetition. It ran only in order to jump; and its last lap was a great leap that was called a chorus. The swing in it was not the swing of a pendulum, but the swing of a hammer when it is flung finally hurtling from the hand in the old Highland sport. In other words, it escaped; somewhere in the course of it, however crude, however obvious, there was a movement of escape; and the only meaning of jazz is that there is no escape. As it was with the music (save the mark!), so it was with the literature (God help it!). The silly old song was sentimental, but it was also romantic. That is, it believed in itself and its own chances of individual happiness; and happiness has to be taken seriously. But the modern world can only believe in unhappiness, and therefore refuses to take it seriously. But the result is a great loss of the purely lyrical quality and instinct. I do not demand a high place in English letters, or a prominent position in the *Golden Treasury*, for the chorus of my youth which ran "Beer, beer, glorious beer, fill yourself right up to here." But I do say

that nobody, after consuming any number of cocktails, has yet been inspired to cry aloud anything so spirited and spontaneous and direct. The poetry inspired by cocktails is timid and tortuous and self-conscious and indirect. I do not say that the song beginning "Daisy, Daisy," is one of the supreme achievements of the English muse, but I do say that it is a song that can be sung. And in the age of jazz and cocktails, men either write songs that could not possibly be sung, or leave off writing songs and write fragments of a demented diary instead.

It is the loss of this great *Gusto* that seems to me the most curious result of the relaxation of Victorian conventions. For we are always told that we were always restricted; that conventions crushed our fathers and mothers and chilled our childhood with respectability. And yet it is certainly true that, if those old songs were bad or banal, they were much more bold and boisterous than anything that has succeeded them. Sometimes I think that our fathers were hard workers and really had holidays. Their holidays were often an orgy of bathos, but they were free. But the modern poet must always be on his best behaviour; I mean, of course, that he must always be on his worst behaviour. He must never be seen except in uniform; that is, in the funeral motley of the cynic. He can never become part of a crowd, even for the singing of a chorus. I looked round sadly in my restaurant, full of fashionably dressed people; but none of them attempted to join in the chorus of "Beer, beer, glorious beer." So, as they say in the short stories, I paid my bill and sadly went out into the night.

ON BOOKS FOR PESSIMISTS

I WAS asked the other day, quite suddenly, by a total stranger in a barber's shop, what book I should recommend to a woman in a state of depression. He was quite an intelligent stranger, and he managed to make the question quite an intelligent and intelligible question. I stopped instantly to answer him to the best of my ability, as naturally as I should have stopped to give him a light for his cigarette. And then, equally suddenly, I found myself confronted with the chasm that has opened between the present time and the time I most vividly remember. I was forced to ask myself the fundamental question: "What is to be said to the young pessimist, as distinct from the old pessimist?" I know all about the old pessimist. I have seen him wax and wane; I have seen him live and die. I know that it matters no more to-day that Swinburne said that the fruit of life is dust than that Byron said (much more truly) that there's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away. There was any amount of pessimism in the period in which I began to write. In fact, it was largely because of the pessimism that I did begin to write. The mere fact that I did begin to write, naturally, will be used as another argument on the side of the pessimist.

Nevertheless, there is a real issue involved. When I was a boy, the world really was divided into optimists and pessimists. Neither of the two terms is very philosophical; and perhaps neither of the two types were very real philosophers. But both

the types were "very real persons. You could not have made Walt Whitman a pessimist except by murdering the real Walt Whitman. You could not have turned Thomas Hardy into an optimist except by torturing him into something totally different from Thomas Hardy. A real fight was fought, a real controversy was engaged, in that Victorian era which some imagine to have been so stolid and unanimous. It was not, on the surface, a religious controversy. It prided itself, so to speak, on being an entirely irreligious controversy. Whitman was quite as much of a Freethinker as Hardy. He had the same facts of the material world before him; he had the same disdain of invoking any immaterial facts to assist him. The question was, quite simply: "Is Life worth living?" Even if Life is only what is involved in the word Biology. Putting aside immortality, is Life worth living? Putting aside heaven, is earth worth living in?

Now, when I was young, there were a number of writers who would say (in Mr. Asquith's famous phrase) that the answer is in the affirmative. They only depended slightly and indirectly, or at least in very differing degrees, on any help outside this world. Browning was certainly on the side of religious belief, on the whole. Meredith was certainly against religious belief, on the whole. Stevenson, though he often used phrases expressing his sympathy with religion, did, on the whole, base his confidence on ideas apart from religion. But the point is that, in that older literary atmosphere, I should instantly have answered anybody who was depressed by saying, "Read Stevenson!" or "Read Browning!" or "Read Meredith!" And something suddenly told me, in the silence of the barber's

shop, that it is no longer any good to tell pessimistic people to read these optimistic writers. Not that there is anything the matter with the optimistic writers. What is the matter is with the pessimistic people. But what *is* the matter with them?

It looks as if the old inquirers, from Job to John Galsworthy, wanted to be convinced that it was all right. It looks to me as if many modern inquirers only want to be convinced that it is all wrong. To bring them good news is to bring them bad news. For instance, suppose we could prove to the interminable procession of young Pacifists, who tell us that the Great War was an act of horrible cruelty, that it was an act of really unavoidable human necessity. I do not mean that I propose to prove it now, though I could make out a much stronger case for it than they imagine. But suppose, merely logically, and for the sake of an abstract argument, that it could be proved. Would the young pessimists be pleased? Would they instantly become young optimists? Would their refined features light up with joy and jollification; and would they be instantly reconciled to nationality and normal living? I fancy not. I fancy that the modern young man (after my alarm in the barber's shop, I avoid the topic of the modern young woman) really wants to be a pessimist. Now I do not believe that Thomas Hardy really wanted to be a pessimist. On the contrary, it seems to me that he took every incidental opportunity to avoid being a pessimist. Whenever he could describe the glories of the glowing southern landscape of England, he described it for the sake of its own beauty; he made his hills and valleys even more vivid than his men and women. There are passages in his novels which I still remem-

ber, alas! long after I have forgotten the novels. I can remember an impression of sweeping and splendid pasturage, ending with a line of noble and uplifted trees. But to the new pessimist it would seem a stretch of flat vegetation, ending in some unusually large vegetables. That, it seems to me, is the trouble just now; not that so many people have found reasons for discontent, as there are always reasons for discontent, but that so many people wish to be discontented. So many people are discontented unless they can be discontented.

Little as I know of the original private problems mentioned in the barber's shop, I know it is not a case of this kind. I took it merely as a text for a wandering speculation; and the speculation has wandered very far. Nevertheless, I think it is one worth pursuing, in the hope of finding its logical end, which I do not profess to have found here. To put the matter very crudely: in the Victorian time even the atheists could be optimists. In the present Georgian time, the atheists are resolved to be pessimists. A man of genius like George Meredith could essentially, if not avowedly, pit Nature against God. A man of genius like Mr. Aldous Huxley is much more annoyed with Nature than he is with God. When I was a boy, I would have told any girl who was depressed to read *Treasure Island* and cheer up; therein doubtless underrating the complexity, nay, perversity, of girls. But I should have supposed that the fighting spirit of Stevenson was a real angle of attack upon life. What is much more important, Stevenson certainly thought it was a real angle of attack upon life. If I had been looking for optimists to answer pessimists like Schopenhauer and Hardy, I could

instantly have turned to Browning or Whitman. And I will confess that, while I have myself found what I hold to be deeper justification of the glory of living, I still think that those jolly pagans of the Victorian time, like Whitman and Meredith, made out a good case for life. What I want to know is why those who are now boys, as I was then a boy, are so strangely and stubbornly twisted towards making a case against life? We also were morbid, because we were boys; we also were maniacs, because we were boys; we were quite capable of killing ourselves, because of the positive beauty of a particular woman; we also were quite capable of killing somebody else, because of the positive justice of a particular revolution. But it was always because of the positive goodness of a particular good thing. Why is it that so many people only want to make a case for the negative badness, not only of a bad thing, but of all things as being bad? The present generation has had more pleasure and enjoyment than any previous generation. Is that the right way of stating the riddle? Or is that the answer?

ON THE TOUCHY REALIST

NOT very long ago, men complained of the cynic, saying that he was hard and had no human feelings. Now they are asked rather to respect the cynic, because his feelings are so soft and sensitive. This is a curious change, but a real one, and one that has not been adequately noticed. There is a type of modern youth which is cynical not because it is thick-skinned, but because it is thin-skinned. It has exactly the same tendency to shudder at anything conventional as the Victorian spinster had to shudder at anything unconventional. Indeed, the cynical youth is in many ways very like the Victorian spinster, only not so self-controlled. There is, however, in his world of culture exactly the same fundamental weakness that really weakened the worst parts of the old world of convention. I mean, there is the horror of certain phrases as such, of certain allusions and associations, without any real effort to reduce them to any system recognized by the reason. The new type of sensitive is sickened by anything that he would call sentimental, just as the spinster was by anything that she would call cynical. In both cases it is a matter of associations and not of analysis; and it matters more what words are used than what thought is presented. The truly refined youth will turn pale green at the mention of a mother's love or be seriously unwell on hearing of a happy marriage; just as the refined of more remote days would feel very sick if they read his little poems



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about torture or typhus fever. I know a distinguished lady who can hardly even hear the words, "women and children," though merely as a convenient classification, without being carried fainting from the room. People are positively nervous about mentioning duty or conscience or religion, because of the high-strung and delicately poised sanity of the new sort of cynic. It is not altogether as a joke that he tells you that, if you say such words, he will scream. Often, even as you hear him casually speaking, you can tell that he is near to screaming. This is something more than a perversity; it is an inversion, and an inversion which amounts to a sort of mental malformation. If our aunts ought to have been able to hear of immorality without fainting, surely our nephews might brace themselves to hear about morality without throwing an epileptic fit. The real and reasonable question of morality and immorality awaits discussion; and it will not be best discussed by epileptics, even if they are also cynics.

All this has ended in a sort of Manichean madness against the fundamental facts of life. It is as if every humour of the human body were a disease; every organ were a cancerous growth; the whole make-up of man consisting of nothing but parasitic organisms. From many modern novels and plays, one would suppose that *all* maternal affection was a "possessive" tyranny of egotistical tenderness; as if *all* domestic contentment were a paralytic stroke of arrested mental progress; as if *all* natural defence of normal privacy and honour were a disease of atavistic jealousy and subhuman segregation. That there are mothers who are too possessive, or wives who are too conventional, or husbands who are too

selfish or unsociable is a fact so obvious that it has been satirized by all the satirists of human history. But the modern thing I mean carries with it quite a different implication. It implies not that the fruit is sometimes rotten, but that the root is always rotten; and the further that feeling goes, the more it works backwards to a rottenness in the very roots of the tree of life. It rather resembles a sort of rage of amputation in a mad surgeon who has forgotten the difference between the malady and the man. There is nothing that needs a sense of proportion so much as amputation; and in this inhuman philosophy it has gone far beyond the cutting off of the hand, or the plucking out of the eye, which symbolize the extremes of asceticism. We may tolerate the dentist, who passes from the curing of toothache to the universal pulling out of teeth. We need not tolerate the psychologist, whose only cure for a headache is cutting off the head. It will be some time before the psychologist can provide an artificial head, as the dentist can provide an artificial set of teeth.

Meanwhile the general stampede against nature goes on, and the paradise of the future looks more and more like a world of wigs, wooden legs, glass eyes, and everything that must be right because nature must be wrong. Just as these men would have forgotten that there is such a thing as the healthy human body, which we may or may not be able to restore, so they have forgotten entirely that there is a healthy condition of the natural emotions, quite apart from whether it was perfectly attained by our immediate parents in the immediate past. Those who are now called Pagans actually do what they themselves have chiefly blamed in the

Puritans: they despise the body and all the affections that lie nearest to the body. Their æstheticism, more than any asceticism, has produced a repugnance for the real facts of life. Christians renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil; the new heathens do their best to accept the devil; but they have not stomach enough really to accept either the flesh or the world.

This is a new and curious philosophical phase. In many it is not yet conscious. But for many it will be the final phase of that fury of fastidiousness which already rages in them against the mere mention of common affections or even natural habits. It is an odd thing that a movement which set out with a claim to satisfy the most perilous natural passions should end by being unsatisfied even with the most harmless natural affections. But the serpent always bites his own tail; and the whirlwind always turns upon itself; and all the emanations of evil in history have always described this strange curve and ended up by contradicting themselves. The excess of Private Judgment ended in Prussianism; the excess of Prohibitionism and Puritanism ended in a government of bootleggers and gangsters; the excess of cut-throat competition, born of the Manchester School, ended in the universal tyranny of the Monopoly and the Trust. This is not the first time in history that the excess of Paganism has led to mere Pessimism, and its name now, like its name two thousand years ago, is, or ought to be, Manicheanism. It appears at that point when men can no longer distinguish between the leprosy that is devouring the life and the life which it devours; when their rage against the weeds that choke the flowers passes into a wild

feeling that all flowers are weeds; when the tares and the wheat seem so hopelessly entangled that the demented farmer is more angry with the wheat than with the tares. That was the frame of mind in which many men, in the age of St. Augustine, for instance, passed from a Greek glorification of nature to an Oriental glorification of nothing; because nature herself demanded sacrifice and life itself imposes limits. By ignoring limits, they lost all sense even of the limit that divides life and death, and finally found in death the only unlimited liberty. That ancient and tragic transformation from the Pagan to the Manichee is passing through many minds, and fulfilling itself before our very eyes to-day; and whether there be any cure for it, deeper than the destruction itself, this is no place to inquire.

But we can protest against history and human experience being distorted by these fleeting fads and fashions. Because we know nothing at all about Cornelia, except that she loved her children and called them her jewels, we need not tolerate the nonsense of somebody who says that she must have been a "possessive" mother, devouring her children's lives with destructive affection. Because we know nothing whatever about Scævola, except that he is said to have thrust his hand in the fire as a defiance to the enemies of his country, we need not listen to the rubbish of recent psycho-pathologists, who will doubtless suggest that he had a perverted sexual pleasure in feeling pain. Because there is nothing known about Absalom, except that he indulged in a very ordinary human freak of getting up against his father, we need not rush to the exploded doctrines of Freud to find an unproved

ON THE TOUCHY REALIST

jealousy about an unrecorded mother. We can keep our common sense, and know that ordinary things are so called because they often happen, and that they need no explanation but the order of things as they are.

ON FACING FACTS

WE talk of people living in the past; and it is commonly applied to old people or old-fashioned people. But, in fact, we all live in the past, because there is nothing else to live in. To live in the present is like proposing to sit on a pin. It is too minute, it is too slight a support, it is too uncomfortable a posture, and it is of necessity followed immediately by totally different experiences, analogous to those of jumping up with a yell. To live in the future is a contradiction in terms. The future is dead; in the perfectly definite sense that it is not alive. It has no nature, no form, no feature, no vaguest character of any kind except what we choose to project upon it from the past. People talk about the dead past; but the past is not in the least dead, in the sense in which the future is dead. The past can move and excite us, the past can be loved and hated, the past consists largely of lives that can be considered in their completion; that is, literally in the fullness of life. But nobody knows anything about any living thing in the future, except what he chooses to make up, by his own imagination, out of what he regrets in the past or what he desires in the present. Any one of the Utopias, or visions of the future, such as were written by Wells or William Morris or Bellamy or any number of others, is simply a patchwork of the past. It can be taken to pieces, and analysed into its component parts in the memories of mankind; a scientific appliance taken from the nineteenth century; a type of

craftsmanship taken from the fourteenth century; a sort of diet taken from the Orientals; a sort of drapery taken from the Greeks. The real disadvantage of this sort of Futurism is that it is much too much disposed to dig in the past; to dig anywhere so long as it is in the past; but, above all, to dig in the most remote past. Thus the Communists tell us that Communism prevailed in some prehistoric period, and many Pacifists support their ideal by a theory that war was a late and artificial addition to the early history of man. Where there is, perhaps, a real need of correction is in correcting this. It is in bringing back these wandering antiquaries from the remote past to the recent past. The most dangerous gap in general knowledge is the gap in the minds of most men about what happened to their own fathers. They often know rather more about what happened to their grandfathers, and much more about what happened to their great-grandfathers.

Let me, like a good patriot, begin by criticizing the defects of my own country. Nobody understands England to-day, and nobody will understand England to-morrow, least of all the Englishman, if he does not realize that a thousand things in his whole mind and make-up refer back to a fairly recent fact; that he was in the nineteenth century the richest man in the world; we might even say the only rich man in the world. It was not only prosperity, but this isolation in prosperity, that made him insular. For it is not islands that make us insular. Nobody ever said that the old Greek islands were particularly insular. The materialistic attempt to explain man by material conditions is always wrong. It was this peculiar prosperity of

the Englishman in an exhausted Europe, after Waterloo (or, rather, the philosophy producing and pursuing it), that produced endless eccentricities that still remain.

In that very Victorian novel, *The Woman in White*, that very Victorian villain, Sir Percival Glyde, says to the Italian villain: "You foreigners are all alike." He said it to Count Fosco, who was not at all like most other foreigners, let us hope, and in any case was an Italian, and therefore utterly different from a Russian or a Spaniard. But what Sir Percival meant, in the language of his time, was that all foreign Counts were beggarly foreign Counts. Count Fosco, he felt, would have been quite as beggarly if he had been a Spanish Count or a Russian Count. Now, no other nation in Europe had that queer and sweeping generalization. There were any number of Jingoës and Imperialists and exaggerated patriots in all the countries of Europe. But no French Chauvinist thought that a Prussian was pretty much the same sort of person as a Portuguese. No Russian Imperial statesman thought the Poles were the same as the Germans, however much he might be oppressing one or plotting against the other. No Austrian thought the English must be like the Turks, merely because they were not like the Austrians. That peculiar sort of sweeping view of "foreigners" was peculiar to the English mind, and it has not entirely vanished from the English subconscious mind. It was rooted in the mood which first tolerated, and then worshipped, the towering fortunes made by the great Whig nobles, over-topping the Crown itself; as in the celebrated phrase of Queen Victoria herself, who said to one of them: "I come from my house

to your palace." It was perfectly true that, compared to those Dukes at that period, almost every foreign Count was a beggarly Count. Only some of us happen to hold a philosophy by which being a beggar might be even better than being a Count.

Now it is the same in another way with the Germans, or, rather especially, with the Prussians. Only I will mingle my confessions with this last patriotic boast; that I do think that the English, however muddle-headed, have more common sense. About the time, or a little after the time, of the great English prosperity came the brief and brilliant period of Prussian victory. At Sadowa, the Prussian sabre suddenly knocked the sceptre out of the hand of the Holy Roman Emperor. Hardly anybody realizes the importance of that stroke, so wholly do we live in our own time and so little in our fathers' time. The effect was enormous; more enormous than the earthquake of 1870 in France. For it has, in fact, transferred the sceptre and everything else from the old German Emperors on the Danube to the new German Emperors on the Spree. It is proved in the very fact that when we said "The Kaiser," we did not mean the old historic Kaiser; that when we say "Germany," we do not mean what men from the twelfth to the eighteenth century meant by the Empire of the Germans. Then followed the more sensational capture of Paris and violent acquisition of two unquestionably French Provinces. Now the Germans have been living ever since on that brief triumphant period, more fully and blindly than we are living on our brief prosperous period. They are a race naturally mythological and living in the clouds, as one of their own greatest poets very truly said. The crash

of the economic depression has come to us; and we at least have begun to suspect dimly that we are not quite so rich as we were. But the crash of the Great War, and the defeat, came to them; and they simply could not believe it. For a time they were stunned; which was called the interlude of enlightened government. But they had always been told that they were invincible, and, sooner or later, at some date long enough after the defeat, they were due to begin boasting again that they are invincible.

That is the meaning of Hitler and the whole hysteria of to-day. Mythology has returned; the clouds are rolling over the landscape, shutting out the broad daylight of fact; and Germans are wandering about saying they will dethrone Christ and set up Odin and Thor. But we cannot understand it by looking only at the last ten years of peace, or even at the original five years of war. The meaning of it, like the meaning of the insular placidity even of the most bewildered Englishman, is hidden in those previous years which are often forgotten, between the end of history and the beginning of journalism. We must realize how strongly the German believed, as in Luther's hymn, that he was in an impregnable fortress; just as the Englishman once believed that he was in an unbreakable Bank. But, as I say, when all is fairly considered, and that without insular prejudices, I do think that the English come out the better of the two. We are beginning to let it dawn on us, in a dazed way, that we are not in a position to patronize the whole world in the matter of money, and we shall put up with our poverty in as manly a manner as we may. But at least we do not all go mad and rush out into the streets screaming

ON FACING FACTS

that we are all millionaires; we do not recognize the general ruin by shouting that all our own pockets are stuffed with pearls and diamonds; we do not tell an astounded world that we are still as rich as we were when Consols were at their highest. And that would be the commercial parallel to the madness of Mr. Hitler.

ABOUT MEREDITH

I HAPPENED to meet again, recently, after many years, a very brilliant and distinguished Italian professor who specializes in the study of English literature. And almost the first words he spoke to me, with more than Italian vivacity and even agitation, were: "What has happened to George Meredith?"

He said it as if George Meredith were still alive, but had been missing for three days from his Surrey home; as if fears were entertained that he might have fallen off Box Hill or been battered featureless by the traffic in Guildford High Street; as if all England was searching for the missing novelist and Scotland Yard was believed to be in possession of a clue. But I knew my Italian friend's meaning much better. What puzzled him was not that all England was searching for George Meredith, but rather that all England was not searching for George Meredith; or even searching for George Meredith's books. And it gave me an increased respect for the acumen and vigilance with which he followed our island literature, to know that he had noticed this very curious blank and even oblivion that has followed on so much admitted brilliance and fame. To any one who remembers, as I do, the days when Meredith was not merely the idol of the intellectuals, but regarded by all the intelligent as one out of the two or three really great men who could be regarded as leaders of the literature of England in the face of Europe, there

ABOUT MEREDITH

is something very extraordinary about this capricious and sudden silence. It is all the more extraordinary because of the ideas for which Meredith stood and the qualities which his admirers chiefly admired. It seemed to most of us, in our boyhood, that he was not only the greatest literary artist then present, but that he was prophetically the first literary artist of the future. He was not only the greatest English author alive, but the only English author who would live. And yet he has not really lived; certainly he has not yet really triumphed. He was the champion of all the things that were expected to triumph; nay, the things that many people tell us have already triumphed. He was, for instance, the champion of Feminism. I do not say that his "Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt" could actually have been sung as a marching song by the well-drilled battalions of Mrs. Pankhurst. For Meredith's literary style did not always lend itself to being used as a roaring chorus for the march or the camp-fire. But, in its philosophy, it expressed almost everything that the Suffragettes wanted to say, and was, in form, more philosophical and intellectual than most of the things they did say. He anticipated the reaction against the Rhodes and Rudyard Kipling type of Imperialism, and urged the sympathetic comprehension of the Celt against the more arrogant nineteenth-century nonsense about the universal superiority of the Anglo-Saxon. True, he was enough of a nineteenth-century man to trace these differences almost entirely along the lines of race, and to be entirely ignorant, for instance, of the extent to which they followed the lines of religion. But that was not so much because he had the limitations of a nineteenth-century man

as because he had the even narrower limitations of a free-thinker.

Anyhow, in a score of ways, the modern world has followed the Meredithcan model for the world, and one could have sworn that he was safe for a much frequented shrine in the Pantheon of Progress. A much more frequented shrine, in fact, is that of Thomas Hardy, who was also a free-thinker, but a much less practical friend to freedom. Hardy was, indeed, full of the sense of numberless things that ought to be done, but it was somewhat softened and mellowed by a persistent doubt about whether they could be done. But Meredith was the sort of nineteenth-century Liberal who was full of a flaming certainty that they would be done; and they were done. But he has no particular credit now for having helped to do them. And it seems, in some strange sense, that it is Meredith himself who is done. I would not disgrace my own older generation by saying for a moment that he is done for, but there seem to be large numbers of the newer generation who act on the assumption that he is done with.

I am well aware, of course, that these political and sociological aspects are quite secondary in the estimate of a great master of imaginative fiction; a man who could create men, and especially women. But such things as his failure to figure, even as a memory, in what many would call the victory of women really is part of a whole comparison that is something of a puzzle. Nothing was more puzzling, for instance, than the strange story of the two funerals, the funeral of Meredith and the funeral of Hardy. Enthusiasts, if I remember rightly, demanded a grave for Meredith in West-

minster Abbey; and it was refused. Enthusiasts demanded a grave for Hardy in Westminster Abbey; and it was at least partially, or by some compromise, granted. I cannot imagine why. If it was a question of literary fame, Meredith stood then even higher than Hardy. If it was a question of incongruity of religion or irreligion, the objection was infinitely stronger against Hardy than against Meredith. Hardy, with all his virtues, or possibly as one of his virtues, was quite frankly a provocative atheist and pessimist. Meredith was not a provocative atheist and not a pessimist at all. A man might read five volumes of Meredith and not find a single direct taunt like that about the President of the Immortals delighting in the torture of Tess.

It was not so much that Meredith did not worship God as that he did worship Nature. And perhaps that is where the breach has come between him and the new sceptics, who are often more bitterly at war with Nature than with God. There are even hints in the work of later sceptics, like Mr. Aldous Huxley and others, that, if they were absolutely driven to the alternative, they would rather take refuge with the supernatural than with the natural. Perhaps Meredith inherited even too much of that sentiment, which was spread all over that century, from Wordsworth to Whitman, that the earth is itself a healer and all its green and growing things are a hope. Yet Meredith was sound and sincere in his own particular version of this vision—that of the wilderness as a sort of garden of medicinal herbs; nor is he proved wrong by the mere fact of another generation of the young, with quite exceptionally sour stomachs, thinking that the physic is nasty. But even if this be granted as a

fair difference of opinion, it does not explain the decline of interest in all that once made Meredith most interesting. It does not explain the lack of memory or allusion concerning the real business of the novelist as a novelist. His character drawing surely remains unquestionably lively and sympathetic. Moreover, though he delighted in a sort of sophistication, it is by no means true that he only wrote about the sophisticated. Following the sad habit of the times, it is long since I have read the greater part of Meredith; but I think the thing that stands out with most startling veracity in my memory is his description of ordinary school-boys. I shall never forget the moment when some boy—Harry Richmond, I think—is challenged by another boy to repeat the word “fool,” and then to repeat it twenty times. And, “with a seriousness of which only boys and such barbarians are capable,” Harry actually recited the word with precisely the required number of repetitions. There is nothing perverse or euphuistic about that; and we are always certain, in Meredith’s books at least, that boys will be boys. The truth is that Meredith was both full-blooded and also foppish and even foolish. He was affected because he was vain, but he was vain because he was natural. We might understand him better as an artist of the Renaissance.

